DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 780 HE 027 964

AUTHOR	Wilson, John K., Ed.
TITLE	Democratic Culture. Newsletter of Teachers for a Democratic Culture. Volumes 1-3.
INSTITUTION	Teachers for a Democratic Culture, Evanston, IL.
PUB DATE	94
NOTE	121p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204 ($5, single copy price; annual membership: $5, students/low-income; $25, faculty/others).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Democratic Culture; v1-3 Fall 1992-Fall 1994
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Freedom; College Faculty; Culture; Culture Conflict; *Democracy; Democratic Values; Faculty College Relationship; Feminism; Government School Relationship; *Higher Education; *Politics of Education; Scholarship; School Community Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Academic Community; Academic Discourse; Political Analysis; *Political Correctness; Political Criticism; Political Culture; Political Education

ABSTRACT

This document contains the first five issues of a newsletter for college faculty on countering the publicity campaign against "political correctness." The first issue from Fall 1992 describes the organization's founding and first year, analyzes a lawsuit brought by a faculty member at Massachusetts Institute of Technology against her institution charging acquiescing in "a persistent and continuing pattern of professional, political and sexual harassment," reviews books of interest, and reports on media coverage of "political correctness." The Spring 1993 issue includes reports on a national lobbying organization for scholarly societies, the political fate of possible Clinton-Administration appointee Johnetta Cole, and commentary from several contributors on national politics, higher education culture, liberalism and multiculturalism, and feminism and classical studies. The Fall 1993 issue contains articles on critical pedagogy, a debate over politics at Louisiana State University, consequences of the Reagan-Bush administrations, commentary on national politics, and other essays as well as monitoring of media coverage of higher education. The Spring 1994 issue offers 14 essays and reports on a variety of topics relating to the "politically correct" debate in academia. The Fall 1994 issue is devoted to analysis and commentary of "Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Been Betrayed by Women" by Christina H. Sommers. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 377 780

Newsletter of
Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405 • Evanston, IL 60204

(312) 743-3662 • FAX: (312) 743-4548
e-mail: jkw3@amber.uchicago.edu

democratic Culture

VOLUMES 1-3

HE 027 964

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

John Wilson

Teachers for a Democratic Culture

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Democratic Culture

Volume 1 Fall 1992 Number 1

P.O. Box 6405 • Evanston, Illinois • 60204 • (312) 743-3662 • Fax (312) 743-4548

TDC: YEAR ONE
A Report from the Coordinators

This inaugural issue of *Democratic Culture* marks the first anniversary of the formation of Teachers for a Democratic Culture. It was during the summer of 1991 that teachers around the country began to discuss the need for an organization that would counter the publicity campaign against "political correctness." That September a group of us drafted the TDC statement of principles, and articles about the organization appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and on the front page of the *New York Times*.

Over eleven hundred teachers have now joined the organization, representing virtually every discipline in the humanities and social sciences as well as law, mathematics, medicine, and the health sciences. Our members come from two and four-year colleges as well as state universities and private research institutions and contain a remarkable diversity of viewpoints. We are encouraged by the rapid growth in our numbers and believe that TDC can continue to play an influential role in today's cultural debates.

In our first year, TDC has sponsored conferences, engaged in lobbying activity, and gained the beginnings of a voice in the national media. We supported a well-attended conference in March on deconstruction and the public media at Loyola University. In April we conducted a joint conference, entitled "Reconstructing Higher Education," at Hunter College in New York with the Union of Democratic Intellectuals.

Regional chapters of TDC have been organized in New England, the Washington, D. C. area, and in the Midwest, and a TDC disciplinary caucus has been formed by members in the field of Classics. We continue to work with members (and invite volunteers) to form chapters and caucuses in other regions and fields. This organizational activity has produced a provisional national Steering Committee, whose members have agreed to serve until a permanent committee can be elected.

Our major lobbying effort has been directed at the increasingly coercive imposition of a conservative agenda on the National Endowment for the Humanities. In April, we organized a protest against the packing of the NEH advisory council with outspoken opponents of new directions in the humanities (including many members of the National Association of Scholars). We issued press releases, called the attention of many in the media to our concerns, and organized a letter-writing campaign to the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. TDC members met with Senate staff representatives in Washington and Chicago. Our efforts have been reported by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and in a recent article on NEH Chairman Lynne Cheney in *Lingua Franca* (David Segal, "Cheney's Command" [September-October, 1992]).

As many of you know, the nominees to the council were ultimately approved in spite of our protest, evidently in a trade-off involving other important issues before the committee (as reported in the *Chronicle*: "Deal on Abortion Bill Said to Pave the Way for 8 Nominees to Humanities Council," July 8, 1992). Nevertheless, our intervention was effective in delaying consideration of the nominees before the Senate Committee, and gained recognition for TDC in Congress. Along the way, many of us have made important contacts and gained experience that promises to be valuable in the future. The NEH itself will be up for full reauthorization in the spring of 1993, and TDC plans to become involved in the hearings. Though we may have lost the battle, we still hope to win the war.

Finally, we believe the publication of *Democratic Culture* (now projected for three times a year) will significantly advance our organization, give our members a forum for expressing their views, and thereby sharpen the organization's program. In short, we think TDC's accomplishments in year one give strong evidence that our organization can play a major role in the national cultural debate.

Teachers for a Democratic Culture

Co-Coordinators:
Gerald Graff
Gregory Jay

Provisional Steering Committee:
Steve Fuller
Jane Gallop
Barbara Gold
Dominick LaCapra
Amy Lang
Ellen Messer-Davidow
Patricia Ramsey
David Shumway
James Slevin
Judith Stacey
Dan Tompkins
Mark Tushnet
Richard Yarborough

Newsletter Creators:
Susan Lowry
Liana Odrcic

Inside

—A report on the media blitz surrounding the Women's Studies Program at MIT

—The battle is joined in the debate over the term "Political Correctness"

—Academics begin to respond to conservative attacks on the academy

—Review of two books concerning the debate over multiculturalism

—Further observations on the NAS—NEH connection

—The corporate bankrolling of the NAS and other conservative academic movements

NEWSCLIPS

SHIFT IN THE WIND?

There are signs that the ideological smear campaign against new academic movements that has had its way in the public media for so long may at last be getting exposed for what it is. We may be guilty of wishful thinking, but several recent publications lead us to hope that the truth may be catching up to the intrepid foes of Political Correctness.

In a review appearing in the *New York Times Book Review* of the latest conservative book trashing the academy, Martin Anderson's *Impostors in the Temple* (whose title page bears the modest proclamation that "American Intellectuals Are Destroying Our Universities and Cheating Our Students of Their Future"), Princeton University sociologist Paul Starr notes the resemblance of Anderson's attack on academics to more customary expressions of right-wing demagoguery. "Indeed," Starr comments, Anderson seems to want to do for the universities what demagogues like Representative Newt Gingrich have done for Congress: "bring the institution into such disrepute that conservatives, long stuck in minority status, will have a chance at gaining power."

Starr also observes that "Mr. Anderson does not give evidence of any direct familiarity with the world of scholarship. But, brave man that he is, he is not prevented by a lack of acquaintance with other academic disciplines from condemning them in the most sweeping terms as given equally to arid irrelevance and intellectual dishonesty." Further encouragement is provided in the Introduction to a new book by Frederick Crews, *The Critics Bear It Away: American Fiction and the Academy*, published by Random House. Since recanting some of his radical commitments of the

cont'd on pg 3, col. 3

The Making of a PC Story

Amy Schrager Lang

The lawsuit filed last April against MIT by professor of literature Cynthia Griffin Wolff provides an instructive example of the way the now-familiar stories of decline and terrorism in the university are manufactured and circulated. Wolff charges MIT with acquiescing in "a persistent and continuing pattern of professional, political and sexual harassment." Her suffering began, she claims in the legal complaint, with her conscientious opposition to the tenuring of two female colleagues and culminated in "a campaign of verbal abuse and isolation." In the document submitted to Massachusetts Superior Court, Wolff contends that she was denied an opportunity to teach in MIT's Women's Studies Program in retaliation for her role in tenure decisions and was vilified by colleagues because "the content of her scholarship" did not "comport with their stated political and ideological orientation."

In its June issue, the conservative magazine *Heterodoxy* recounts the story of Wolff's suit in an article entitled "Sex, Lies and Red Tape at MIT." The *Heterodoxy* article presents a lurid tale of Wolff battling single-handedly against "a radical clique, some of them women and some of them gay, who have seized control of the Literature section at MIT." It recounts Wolff's victimization by the joint forces of radical feminism and gay activism, led by eighteenth-century scholar Ruth Perry, currently director of Women's Studies, and classicist David Halperin, director of Gay and Lesbian Studies. *Heterodoxy* trumpets Wolff's "steadfast" refusal—as if someone was forcing her—to "assert that Emily Dickinson was a lesbian" and makes flagrant use of guilt by association in its effort to smear Halperin by invoking legal difficulties experienced by his brother.

But what *Heterodoxy* says is less important that what it leaves out. Nowhere does the article mention the fact that Halperin has flatly denied the charge of "unprofessional conduct" and that no charge of sexual harassment has been brought against him. Likewise, the editors of *Heterodoxy* do not feel obliged to acknowledge the statement issued by Perry's lawyer and publicly reiterated by the entire senior faculty of Women's Studies that, contrary to Wolff's claims, "Professor Wolff never proposed a course" to the Women's Studies Program and "was never told she couldn't propose one." At least the mainstream press contacted those accused of misconduct in Wolff's complaint and printed their rebuttals, whereas the article *Heterodoxy* circulated to its wide readership gives no hint there are any denials.

Nor would one know from the story that Wolff has been a powerful figure at MIT who has largely had her way there. In 1980 she was welcomed as a tenured full professor by the literature section; in 1985, MIT awarded her one of the first endowed chairs in the humanities. She has chaired the literature section's curriculum committee and has served on the institute-wide Committee on Educational Policy. Wolff's interventions in promotion and tenure cases have succeeded, not failed. Her efforts to call the MIT administration's attention to the sins of the literature section have resulted in committees of inquiry. Along with other faculty, she has been invited to propose courses in Women's Studies. Wolff's characterization of herself as a victim is only slightly less bizarre than her characterization of the Literature Section—a division which has yet successfully to tenure a woman from its ranks or to appoint more than one non-White to its faculty—as a hotbed of radicalism.

None of this gets into *Heterodoxy*, of course, which instead offers the familiar story: Wolff, battling single-handedly against the "politicization" of her department, is presented as a martyr, futilely seeking justice in the corrupt halls of the academy. More striking—and more important—is the fact that the 23-page complaint Wolff submitted to Massachusetts Superior Court constructs her case in terms so readily assimilable to the familiar conventions. Apparently as interested in publicity as in legal remedy, Wolff presents herself as another lone defender of academic "standards" victimized by the left-wing thought police. Replete with charges of sexual misconduct, ideological warfare, and institutional malfeasance, her legal complaint tells an irresistible tale of the "traditional" versus the "new," the scholarly versus the merely fashionable—and, by implication, the American versus the unAmerican—in a straightforward narrative neatly designed for the retelling.

But Wolff's complaint was not only written with an eye to the press; it appears to have been supplied to the press within hours of its submission to the courts. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* not only knew about Wolff's suit but had access to the complaint by April 8, within twenty-four hours of its filing. In fact, Ruth Perry and others named in the complaint first learned of its existence when they were contacted by the *Chronicle*. The strategy is clear: get your accusations published widely enough and their truth hardly matters.

cont'd on pg. 3, col. 1

cont'd from pg. 2, col. 3

After all, the skilled character assassin counts on the denials of the accused falling away in the course of circulation, as they usually do. Moreover, since evidentiary matters are the province of the courts, the contents of a legal complaint, however distorted or dishonest, can be cited, quoted, referred to in the media without fear of charges of libel. Whatever the fate of Wolff's suit in the courts, its political value as propaganda is assured by its circulation.

The damage to those whom Wolff attacks in her complaint is, likewise, accomplished in the press not in the courts. Since none of the faculty members whose behavior Wolff criticizes in her complaint are defendants in the lawsuit (the only defendant in the case is MIT), their opportunities to respond are narrowly limited. Regardless of the outcome of Wolff's legal face-off with the MIT administration, the accusations of wrongdoing against Perry, Halperin and others, against the MIT Women's Studies Program and the program in Gay and Lesbian Studies, are now part of the public record. Tailored to satisfy prurient interest in academic scandal, circulated, it appears, by Wolff and her lawyers, and exempt from legal repercussions, Wolff's suit seems to have been designed for the purpose of discrediting new modes of scholarship and those who represent them.

The strategy has been highly effective. On April 15, a week after Wolff's complaint was filed in court, the *Chronicle* recounted her allegations and the responses of those criticized in the complaint. On April 22, *The Boston Globe* carried the story in its metropolitan section; a week later, *The Los Angeles Times* used the case as the centerpiece of an article headed "Bitter Arguments Mar a Raging Debate among Academic Feminists." The story of the suit appeared in the *New York Times* the first week in May. Other journals, from the *New Republic* and the *New Criterion* to Boston's *Gay Community News* to the whole range of student newspapers at MIT, have likewise offered their recyclings of the story.

Unfortunately, several reporters credulously accepted the word of right-wing journalists and academics as if their accounts were disinterested. The *Heterodoxy* story was written by Avik Roy, an undergraduate at MIT, who drew on "research developed by *Counterpoint* magazine," the "MIT-Wellesley Journal of Rational Discourse and Campus Life." This would be a little like the *Daily Worker* announcing that it has based a story on research developed by Pravda. In fact, *Counterpoint*—whose August masthead names Peter Collier and David Horowitz, the editors of *Heterodoxy*, as members of its Advisory Board—ran a longer version of Roy's article in its June issue. But Roy had already made an appearance in the press. Identifying him only as "a student writer for an independent campus newspaper," the April 22 *Boston Globe* quotes Roy's view that "a certain group was trying to force its views on the rest of the faculty." Nowhere does it mention *Counterpoint*'s conservative editorial policy or its partial funding by the Madison Center for Educational Affairs, which has also funded the *Dartmouth Review*.

This slanted view is elaborated by Christina Hoff Sommers, professor of philosophy at Clark University, in the *New York Times* coverage of the suit. Described as "a friend of Professor Wolff," Sommers voices the opinion that Wolff's persecution is "a case of political correctness gone mad." Anyone who dares to oppose the "radical feminists, gay theorists or Marxists" who control the MIT Literature Section, she goes on, "gets labeled as part of the white, hetero, patriarchal hegemony." Sommers' friendship with Wolff is acknowledged in the *Times*, but not her vested interest in the attack on political correctness evidenced by her presence alongside the editors of *Heterodoxy* on the masthead of the August *Counterpoint*, or by her membership in the National Association of Scholars, whose views on multiculturalism, affirmative action, and political correctness have been amply expounded in advertisements in the *Times*.

Things, as we say, circulate. And what is circulating is the story Wolff has so carefully crafted to conform to the larger narrative, already in circulation, of decline and intimidation in the academy. Of course, one could argue that Wolff's strategic use of the press is simply in the nature of the game, but that fact makes it no less dangerous. The vulnerability of the "parties" most damaged by Wolff's accusations and the publicity she has garnered for them—people who are not, technically, parties to the case at all and therefore have few means of recourse—should stand as a warning to the press of their power and of their obligation to investigate such accusations with extraordinary care.

By exacting an admission of guilt from MIT, Wolff undoubtedly hopes not only to gain legal confirmation for her smear campaign but to compel MIT—and by extension, other institutions of higher learning—to enforce the new right-wing cultural agenda. But the outcome of the lawsuit is almost beside the point. The real goal of the suit, the vilification of individuals and movements, has already been accomplished.

Amy Schrager Lang is associate professor of American Studies at Emory University. She was a member of the literature faculty at MIT from 1978 to 1988.

NEWSCLIPS

cont'd from pg. 2, col. 1

1960s, Crews has been a harsh critic of the trend toward theory and ideological criticism in academic literary studies, and his new book mounts a critique of American literature studies that many will strongly disagree with. Crews goes out of his way, however, to dissociate himself from "such cultural nostalgics as William Bennett, Allan Bloom, Lynne Cheney, and Roger Kimball—people who conceive of the ideal university as a pantheon for the preservation of great works and great ideas."

Crews goes on to "reject the rightists' apocalyptic account of the current state of criticism, whose complexities altogether escape them." He points out that "the most vigorous and telling critiques of ostensibly left doctrines" in the university "usually come from segments of the left itself," and that "the left, unlike the right, has made some indisputably fertile contributions to the recent evolution of literary study." We have the left to thank, he concludes, "for launching a fundamental debate about the canon and for bringing minority concerns into the foreground—developments that are especially striking and revivifying in my own field of American literature."

Finally, things may be turning around at the *New Republic*. Those who have followed the magazine over the past few years will know that it has been among the most relentless in attacking multiculturalism and other new movements, invariably equating them with strident defenses of racial or gender purity. The magazine's special issue on "Race on Campus" (February 18, 1991) was all too typical, with its lead editorial informing readers that multiculturalism is "an orthodoxy that prefers those texts that are

cont'd on pg 4, col. 1

NEWSCLIPS

cont'd from pg. 3, col. 3

racially pure," whose "objective is a unanimity of thought on campus...." So it was refreshing to see a fine essay by classical philosophy professor Martha Nussbaum in defense of gay and lesbian studies featured as the cover piece in the July 13-20 issue of the journal. In addition to providing a useful clarification of the kinds of work done in gay and lesbian scholarship, Nussbaum argues that "the conservative attack on gay studies is not a defense of classical learning, or of the Western philosophical tradition. It is an attack on that learning and that tradition. At root, these critics are saying little about intellectual life and everything about political life: these studies, they are saying, are motivated by the desire of certain people to be included in the academy and to have their way of life recognized as an object of study, and that is precisely what we object to: these people should not be included and their way of life should not be recognized. But why not? What is the argument? Why are these people, and knowledge about them, being pushed away? The Aristophanic answer comes back: because there is something strange about them and they make us very uncomfortable. Never mind that both history and philosophy are, in their very nature, forms of inquiry into the strange and unsettling."

Call for Submissions

Democratic Culture welcomes submissions on any subject of interest to its readers. Submissions should not exceed 1000 words. Please send your submission to *Democratic Culture*, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204.

BOOKS OF INTEREST

Debating P.C. Ed. Paul Berman. NewYork: Dell Publishing, 1992. 338 pages. $8.00 paper.

Beyond P.C. Toward a Politics of Understanding. Ed. Patricia Aufderhide. St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1992. 236 pages. $10.00 paper.

Debating P.C. and *Beyond P.C. Toward a Politics of Understanding* gather together the disparate threads of the debates over "Political Correctness," multiculturalism, canon expansion, and speech codes on college campuses. By virtue of their wide-ranging selections, both editions disprove simplistic, bipolar accounts of the P.C. debate. Aufderheide's selection and arrangement of texts provides a refreshing departure from the "us-versus-them" stereotypes associated with media coverage of the debate. Berman's effort to give a thorough account of the debate by juxtaposing opposing viewpoints, while informative, runs the risk of reinforcing some of these stereotypes.

Beyond P.C. Toward a Politics of Understanding contains a careful selection of essays representing a spectrum of positions within the P.C. debate. The edition offers a brief and well-informed introduction, and divides its material into five concise sections. Although Aufderheide's arrangement would at first suggest a binary set-up—she entitles the first two chapters "Attack on P.C." and "The Counterattack"—the three following chapters entitled "'In My Experience'," "Beyond P.C.," and "Mosaic" move the reader beyond this two-sided construction. The first two sections familiarize the reader with the terms of the debate, and give a sense of what is at stake for its various participants. Particularly helpful pieces include a statement issued by the NAS entitled "The Wrong Way to Reduce Campus Tensions," the "Statement of Principles" issued by Teachers For A Democratic Culture, and Ruth Perry's informative article "A Short History of the Term *Politically Correct*." What enriches the volume by far, however, is the sequence of sections that follows. The section "'In My Experience'" provides a forum for both undergraduate and graduate student voices. In "What Revolution at Stanford?," senior English major Raoul V. Mowatt dispels misconceptions about Stanford's recently initiated "CIV" requirement. In "What Campus Radicals?," graduate Rosa Ehrenreich critically reflects on her four years at Harvard, and explores the actual (as opposed to alleged) effects "political correctness" had on that campus. The section "Beyond P.C." reevaluates the P. C. debate by examining it from differing practical and philosophical perspectives. Patricia Williams argues in "Defending the Gains" that all things considered, "our hardest job in these times is not to forget why we...are where we are" (194). Williams decries silence in the face of offensive verbal challenges from students, and urges academics to remain vocal lest valuable and hard-won ground be lost. Finally, in the section entitled "Mosaic," Aufderheide fashions the volume's powerful ending with snippets from George Bush, Cornel West, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Molefi Kete Asante, among others. These excerpts play off one another, and together they form a poignant ending which reinforces the edition's overall message: the P.C. debate is as nuanced as it is complex.

Berman's *Debating P.C.* represents the P.C. controversy by compiling pieces written for scholarly journals, reviews and articles printed in the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice*. Robert MacNeil's nationally televised interview with Dinesh D'Souza, and Catharine Stimpson's 1990 MLA presidential address. The resultant mix is organized into six chapters, including "Debating Political Correctness," "Politics and the Canon," and "Free Speech and Speech Codes." Some scholars will take issue with the accuracy of Berman's twenty-six page introduction to the collection, which attempts to summarize, cavalierly, the theoretical and philosophical movements since the late sixties. Berman is particularly critical of recent attempts to combine pedagogy and scholarship with a multicultural agenda.

The articles in *Debating P.C.* are arranged in a point-counterpoint format. For example, Berman follows Stimpson's presidential address with Roger Kimball's polemical appraisal of the event. In a similar fashion, Diane Ravitch's "Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures" is followed by Molefi Kete Asante's rebuttal of the same. Although this orchestration of arguing voices is a gesture toward representing all accounts equally, Berman's oppositional pastiche ends up reinforcing the polarity emphasized by media hype. One chapter even bears the title "Texas Shoot Out," which, though mildly clever, brandishes a ready-aim-fire rhetoric that detracts from the complexity the volume's articles so aptly speak to on their own. For their sophisticated treatment of the issues at stake, articles deserving close attention include those by Richard Perry and Patricia Williams, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Ted Gordon and Wahneema Lubiano, Molefi Kete Asante, Paula Rothenberg, Michael Bérubé, Cornel West, Edward Said, Catharine Stimpson, and Stanley Fish. —*Liana Odrcic*

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

The NAS-NEH Connection Again

Daniel P. Tompkins

NEH Chairman Lynne Cheney's latest appointment comes from her favorite talent pool, the National Association of Scholars. Continuing a trend that TDC has repreatedly noted, Cheney has named NAS member J. Rufus Fears as Director of the NEH Division of Research Programs, a major management position.

Professor Fears, a classicist, previously taught at the University of Indiana and Boston University, then served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Oklahoma. As NAS Senior Fellow, he appeared along with B.U. President John Silber in November 1988 at that organization's first general conference, entitled "Reclaiming the Academy: Responses to the Radicalization of the University." He also sits on the board of the conservative Liberty Fund.

Massachussetts Congressman Chester G. Atkins has said, "The agenda of the NEH is colored by the philosophical pressures that are exerted on it by the Buchanan right." Rufus Fears' background with the Liberty Fund and NAS fits this mold neatly. However, he has been praised as a teacher and administrator, and has worked effectively with scholars whose political and academic perspectives are less conservative than his own. Will he be able to do so on Cheney's tight ship? At this moment, that's anyone's guess.

Daniel P. Tompkins is a professor of Classics at Temple University and a TDC organizer.

WATCH ON THE RIGHT

The Best Ideas that Money Can Buy

In future issues of Democratic Culture, this column will continue to document the increasingly successful attempt of conservative foundations to buy the influence on higher education that their ideas have been unable to win on their merits. This phenomenon was first widely reported by Jon Wiener in a 1990 article for *The Nation* called "Dollars for Neocon Scholars: The Olin Money Tree" (reprinted in Wiener's *Professors, Politics, and Pop* [1991]). Wiener's research demonstrated that "Olin and several small conservative foundations provide a vital link between universities and the political world of Republicans in government, right-wing think tanks and conservative publications."

Wiener's findings have been reinforced and extended by Donald Lazere (in "Political Correctness Left and Right" [*College English* (March, 1992)], and Ellen Messer-Davidow, who presented a paper on the successful network of right-wing organizations at the 1987 MLA convention (a full version appeared as a chapter in the 1988 volume *Literature, Language, and Politics*, edited by Betty Jean Craige).

According to Wiener, Lazere, and Messer-Davidow, this organizational network comprises a new ideas industry and ideology apparatus specifically designed to circumvent and subvert the traditional institutions of higher education. Nowadays you are more likely to hear a "scholar" from the Heritage Foundation quoted in the news than the views of an expert from an accredited college or university. Building on the organizational funding and media techniques developed by the Christian Right, this network publishes its own books and articles, funds its own experts, conducts media blitzes, and lobbies legislators. "Through this apparatus," wrote Messer-Davidow in the February issue of the Women's Review of Books, "the Right has, in the last two years alone, instigated the P.C. controversy, defended conservative nominations to the NEH council, promoted core curricula and common culture, opposed affirmative action, decried sexual harrassment charges, attacked multiculturalism—and demonized academic feminism."

In1991, TDC issued a fact sheet based on Olin's own annual report, confirming the findings of Messer-Davidow and Wiener and discovering additional beneficiaries of Olin's largesse. On the payroll, one finds, among others, Dinesh D'Souza, Allan Bloom, Robert Bork, Irving Kristol, William Bennett, David Horowitz, Herbert London, The National Association of Scholars, the Madison Center, *Commentary*, *American Spectator*, *New Criterion*, the *Dartmouth Review*, and William F. Buckley's "Firing Line." If one examines the vitae of the recently appointed members of the advisory council of the National Endowment for the Humanities, one finds that almost all are either members of the National Association of Scholars and/or have received monies from Olin or its associates, such as the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, or the Bradley Foundation. As Wiener points out, one of the largest and most alarming Olin interventions is the "Law and Economics" program, which offers millions of dollars to over a dozen elite universities to fund professors and courses espousing Milton Friedman's thesis that free-market capitalism is the bottom line of justice. At UCLA, which terminated the program after a year, the school's curriculum committee wrote that Olin was "tak-

cont'd on pg. 6, col. 2

NEWSCLIPS

A NECESSARY DEBATE

A debate that we think has been too long postponed seems to be shaping up in the pages of the *Socialist Review* over the term "political correctness." In an essay entitled "Political Correctness and Identity Politics" in the journal's December 1991 issue (it has also been reprinted in the collection *Beyond PC: Toward a Politics of Understanding*, published by Graywolf Press), Barbara Epstein writes that though she hesitates "to adopt a term that carries the right-wing agenda of the neo-conservatives," the term does get at "what seems to me to be a troubling atmosphere on the Left, having to do with the intersection of identity politics and moralism." While dissociating herself from right-wing versions of the argument, Epstein says she has witnessed "a process of self-intimidation in the name of sensitivity to racism, sexism, and homophobia which tends to close down discussion and make communication more difficult."

In her courses in the History of Consciousness program at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Epstein writes that "I frequently find myself in discussions that seem to be dominated by a collective fear of saying something wrong." In discussing a book that criticized the sectarian politics of black power movements in the 1960s, her students acknowledged "that they could not talk about the book without entertaining criticisms of a black movement, which would raise the possibility of racism." Epstein describes a similar problem teaching a book on the radical feminism of the sixties and seventies by Alice Echols, "which includes accounts of the ideological rigidities and personal attacks that took place under the slogan of 'the personal is political.'" Though "Echols's

cont'd on pg. 6, col. 1

NEWSCLIPS

cont'd from pg. 5, col. 3

book is dedicated to the goals of radical feminism," some students in Epstein's class argued that even if early feminists had made some mistakes, to write about them was to give ammunition to the enemy." She goes on to describe a meeting of feminists at which some women argued "that Echols must be wrong, that these things could not have happened, that if they had happened surely they had not been very important and should not be emphasized in an account of the history of feminism."

In a letter published in the January-March issue of *SR*, Erica Bloom objects to Epstein's charges of "an atmosphere of self-intimidation." Bloom points out that such an atmosphere, after all, is precisely what "existed for people of color, women, and religious minorities long before the concern with multiculturalism and poststructuralism became manifest."

Bloom's argument properly reminds us that a brand of "political correctness" flourished on campuses before the 1960s, though PC adopted quieter tactics in the era of "normalcy" after the purges of McCarthyism. With women, minorities, and intellectual radicals excluded from admission or employment at most distinguished colleges and universities, it was hardly necessary to overtly police the thought of students or faculty. The common culture that triumphed in the seminars was less the expression of reasoned principles than of an unexamined political consensus.

But surely Bloom would not suggest that it's all right for the traditional targets of intimidation to do their own counter-intimidating now that they have the opportunity. Such a position would not only be questionable on ethical grounds—two wrongs

cont'd on pg. 7, col. 3

cont'd from pg. 5, col. 2

ing advantage of the student's financial need to indoctrinate them with a particular ideology."

It is not just the financial need of the students, however, that explains the program's popularity. Like a McDonald's franchise, the Olin package comes with a complete menu of choices and inducements, including research professorships, lecture funds, curricula, syllabi, and bibliography. It also offers visiting lectures by Olin professors from around the country and their like-minded friends in the judiciary and government; thus an Olin Center will bring you a Robert Bork, an Antonin Scalia, or an Allan Bloom for the asking. How can a budget-strapped Dean in an era of recession and state funding cuts turn down such a bonanza? It has proved an offer too good to refuse for the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Chicago, Clark University, Duke University, George Mason, Harvard, MIT, the University of Pennsylvania, Stanford, the University of Virginia, and Yale.

Whenever such dubious use of funds is criticized, however, we hear the same familiar response: the liberal-left academy has always enjoyed its pet sources of financial support. So why shouldn't the conservative academy too?

This argument is trotted out once again in a recent issue of the *New Criterion* (June, 1992), in an article pretending to report on the April joint conference held in New York by TDC and the Union of Democratic Intellectuals. In the article, Heather MacDonald argues that "the proponents of the traditional humanities curriculum" have yet to match "the millions of dollars of support" that have gone into "curricular transformation projects" from such agencies as "the Mellon, Ford, and Rockefeller foundations, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the MLA, and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, and individual colleges."

MacDonald neglects, of course, to mention recent news reports on the NEH, in which former staffers tell of how grant-proposals and scholars thought to be too "political" are increasingly blacklisted at the Endowment. She also shows her ignorance about the Modern Language Association, which is not a grant-giving agency at all. But what is most misleading is MacDonald's implied argument that the funding of left-leaning projects by Mellon, Ford, Rockefeller, and FIPSE is simply a liberal counterpart to the funding of conservative projects by Olin and others.

This argument blurs a crucial distinction. Unlike Olin, Scafe, and the other foundations on the right, the Mellon, Ford, Rockefeller, and FIPSE foundations make no commitment in advance to any particular social philosophy. And though some of these foundations have indeed at times exhibited a strong populist tilt (as did NEH in the sixties), they support a great variety of projects across the political spectrum. A foundation such as Olin, by contrast, explicitly declares an agenda in advance, namely, to support programs that are "intended to strengthen the economic, political, and cultural institutions upon which...private enterprise is based." Clearly the message of such foundations is, if you don't endorse our ideology, don't bother to apply.

Furthermore, traditionally academic fundraising begins at the local level, with a decision by a scholar or faculty group that a particular intellectual problem or curricular issue needs to be addressed. A proposal is drafted that attempts to meet disciplinary and institutional standards. The proposal is then submitted to one or more granting agencies, which pass it on for review to panels of experts in the field. Proposals are funded on the basis of well-established professional criteria.

Compare this to the programs funded by the Olin program in Law and Economics. The programs' conception and goals have already been generated and predefined at the national level, where paid staffers at private think-tanks develop detailed outlines adhering to a prescribed political philosophy. The program is then offered, along with large sums of cash, to various institutions. The programs may have little or no support among the faculty, who played no role in their development. But this minor obstacle can be overcome, since along with the inducement of research monies, come paid Olin Professorships to allow the importation of new faculty who will support the party line.

The current recessionary climate, in which state universities are defunded and non-partisan corporate funding is decreasing, has created an opportunity for private ideologues to purchase enormous influence on campus. Meanwhile, the NEH, NEA, and other federal culture agencies are packed with appointees from the Heritage, American Enterprise, and Madison Foundations, or from the lists of the NAS. Add the efforts of the Department of Education to allow alternative accrediting bodies to legitimate right-wing and evangelical colleges, and the picture of the conservative assault on academic autonomy comes sharply into focus. Despite the hypocritical outcry over merit and standards, the right-wing's philosophy is clear: what America needs is the best ideas that money can buy.

—Gregory Jay & Gerald Graff

Bulletin

As we go to press, NEH Director Lynne Cheney is releasing a report renewing her blistering attack on "P.C." We invite our readers to send us responses to Cheney for a special section in a future issue of *Democratic Culture*

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION
JOIN TDC
OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH THIS FORM

The continuing success of TDC depends upon your involvement and your contributions. ***We ask that all current members of TDC return this form now to renew their memberships, which will be good for the calander year 1993.*** (Even if you have contributed money recently, we still need you to return this form so we can confirm your address and affiliation information.) This will standardize our membership bookeeping, and avoid the time and expense of contacting individual members for renewals.

_____ Yes, I want to become a new member of TDC

_____ Yes, I want to renew my membership in TDC

Enclosed is my 1993 contribution of:

_____ $50 _____ $25 _____ $5 (students)

Name _____

Department _____

School or Affliliation _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____

Home Address (if preferred) _____

_____

Phone Numbers:

Business _____ FAX _____

Home _____

IMPORTANT: TDC plans to produce a membership directory. Please indicate below the information you wish to have included:

Name _____ Yes _____ No
Professional Affiliation and Address _____ Yes _____ No
Business Phone and FAX _____ Yes _____ No
Home Address and Phone _____ Yes _____ No

Please mail this membership form to Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405 Evanston, IL 60204.

NEWSCLIPS

cont'd from pg. 6, col. 1

don't make a right—but also bad tactics.

As we see it, if the fight to open the university to a wider range of voices, subjects, and viewpoints is a fight to extend the democratic principle, then the forms of democratic debate need to be defended as well. The fact that an atmosphere of intimidation has existed in the past is no excuse for tolerating it when it favors "our side." Nor is doing so likely to win the sort of public support we have to have if we hope to overcome the knee-jerk PC bashers of the right.

It seems to us especially important that changes in the curriculum be the result of full and open debate rather than being imposed by administrative fiat. A model case of reform through democratic procedures is provided by the University of Massachusetts-Boston, as recently reported by Esther Kingston-Mann in the *Boston Review* ("Multiculturalism without Political Correctness: The University of Massachusetts/ Boston Model," *Boston Review*, XVII, nos. 3-4 [May-July, 1992]).

Granted, calls for open debate are deceptive if only one side is allowed on the platform (as was not the case at U. Mass-Boston). Still, we believe the best response is to struggle for the recognition of one's own voice, not for the silencing of others.

The editors of *Democratic Culture* don't intend that our voices have the last word, however. With this editorial we invite TDC members to contribute their own responses and position papers, a selection of which we will publish in the second issue of *Democratic Culture*.

Newsletter of
Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405 • Evanston, IL 60204

(312) 743-3662 • FAX: (312) 743-4548
e-mail: jkw3@amber.uchicago.edu

democratic Culture

Volume 2
Number 1
Spring 1993

TDC JOINS NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE

IN January of this year Teachers for a Democratic Culture accepted an invitation to join the National Humanities Alliance. The NHA, a lobbying organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., includes over 75 major scholarly societies, higher education institutions, and other organizations concerned with federal programs in the humanities. NHA's current director, John Hammer, worked cooperatively with TDC last year to protest the abuses in administration of the National Endowment for the Humanities. NHA and TDC agreed that this experience showed the benefits to both organizations of working together in the future.

We feel that membership in the NHA is a major advance for TDC, since it will give us the specific lobbying voice in Washington that we have lacked up to now.

The NHA will keep TDC informed about national policy, programs, and legislation concerning the humanities. TDC will in turn provide NHA with input on humanities issues and join in the discussion that produces NHA directions and activities. For example, the NHA will be involved in preparing for the Congressional hearings on the reauthorization of the NEH, and TDC has already provided suggestions on this issue. Two TDC members in the Washington, D.C. area, Professors Jim Slevin (English, Georgetown University) and Judy Hallett (Classics, University of Maryland) have been very active in contacts with the NHA. TDC members interested in becoming more involved in humanities policy at the national level should contact either Jim or Judy. Letters to the NHA should be addressed to John Hammer, Director, NHA, 21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 604, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Are You Now, or Have You Ever Been, a Leftist?

McCarthyism and the Case of Johnnetta Cole

John K. Wilson

THE attacks on "political correctness" have commonly asserted that McCarthyism in America has moved to the left, and now appears only in intolerant compaigns to suppress the free speech of conservative and liberal dissenters. Johnnetta Cole can tell you how untrue this is.

Cole is the president of Spelman College, the head of the Clinton transition team on education, labor, and the arts and humanities, and—until the conservatives began dragging her name through the political mud—a candidate for Secretary of Education.

The attacks started on Friday, December 11th, when the New York Jewish weekly *The Forward* reported: "An educator with a record of political activism on behalf of hardline, old-left Communist front organizations has emerged in a pivotal role on President-elect Clinton's transition operation, generating concern in both the labor movement and the Jewish world as to how committed Mr. Clinton is to the centrist strategy he pursued as a candidate." *The Forward* went on to accuse Cole of "strident agitating against American policy" and taking "a grim, left-wing view of American life."

On Tuesday, December 15th, A.M. Rosenthal's column in *The New York Times* attacked Cole's role in the Clinton transition team, saying that it is "impossible to trust some people for public office, people who have broken no law but who you feel in your stomach should not be hanging around government." On Thursday, December 17th, *The New York Times* reported that "after a run of bad publicity, her chances of being named to any job requiring Senate confirmation appear near nil," and Cole herself said there "is no possibility I will go to Washington at all."

The charges which turned Rosenthal's stomach are remarkable in their resemblance to the guilt by association attacks of the McCarthy era:

• For years, Cole was a member of the national committee of the pro-Cuban Venceremos Brigade, which sponsored sugar-cutting summer trips to Cuba and is accused by the FBI of having connections to Cuban intelligence.

• In 1983, Cole was listed as a member of the executive board of the U.S. Peace Council (USPC), which Rosenthal calls "pro-Soviet, anti-Israel, pro-Marxist in Grenada, anti-criticism of the North Vietnamese—the usual collection of far-left loves and hates." An FBI

continued on the next page

TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Co-Coordinators:
Gerald Graff
Gregory Jay

Provisional Steering Committee:
Steve Fuller
Jane Gallop
Henry Louis Gates
Barbara Gold
Dominick LaCapra
Amy Lang
Donald Lazere
Ellen Messer-Davidow
Patricia Ramsey
David Shumway
James Slevin
Judith Stacey
Dan Tompkins
Mark Tushnet
Richard Yarborough

Newsletter Editor:
John K. Wilson

Newsletter Layout:
Reid Huntsinger

INSIDE

— *Judith Stacey* on intellectual life after Cheney, **page 3**.
— *Tim Brennan* defends the Old Left against left and right critics, **page 4**.
— *Donald Lazere* answers the conservative distortions, **page 6**.
— *Barbara Gold* confronts sexism in Classical Studies, **page 12**.
Plus: News on Sheldon Hackney, the National Association of Scholars, the end of the culture wars, and more.

NEWSCLIPS

Liberal Education or Conservative Education?

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) has announced a new accrediting agency, the American Academy for Liberal Education. The AALE has the noble goal of encouraging liberal education; unfortunately, it seems to confuse improving education with advancing the conservative agenda.

AALE has developed 17 accrediting standards, including emphasis on teaching over research; distinguishing between fundamental courses and less important ones; supporting freedom of speech; having senior faculty teach introductory classes; and requiring math, science, and foreign language classes, as well as at least one-third of a student's course work to be devoted to classes like surveys of Western civilization.

AALE leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Will universities which encourage multicultural education and other innovative subjects be knocked off the list? Will colleges that don't focus solely on "Western civilization" surveys be considered illiberal? And I think we can all guess which courses are going to count as "fundamental" in the minds of the conservatives.

AALE fails to ask the right questions about a liberal education: Do students learn? Are they taught how to critically read books? Do they examine a variety of different ideas and learn how to challenge their own presuppositions? These should be among the tests of a liberal education, not whether a college requires a certain number of classes on Western culture.

Instead, AALE gives us the standard conservative litany: Research is bad, teaching is good; multiculturalism is bad, Western civ survey courses are good. A case can be made for all of these ideas, but it's absurd to claim that a college doesn't provide a liberal education unless it has a Western culture requirement and a heavy teaching load for professors.

The impetus for AALE began during the controversy over the Middle States "diversity" standard, when the accrediting agency delayed approval of Baruch College (which had 70 percent minority students but less than three percent minority faculty) and Westminster Theological Seminary (which prohibited women from its governing board of ordained elders). After pressure from

Wilson from page 1

official in 1982 accused the World Peace Council (of which the USPC is an affiliate) of being "the largest and most active Soviet international front organization." Cole says she wrote for the USPC, but was never a member of the group. She says she "is pro-Israel but also believes Palestinians should have equal rights."

• Cole was the president of the U.S.-Grenada Friendship Society before the United States invaded that country during the Reagan Administration.

• In 1975, Cole signed an advertisement in *The New York Times* which declared, "Vietnam now enjoys human rights as it has never known in history" and criticized Joan Baez for accusing the Vietnam government of holding political prisoners.

• In 1984, Cole spoke at a tribute for Herbert Aptheker, a leading American historian who was a Communist; Cole says she was recognizing his professional work as a historian, not his ideology. *The Forward* also claimed, "Ms. Cole's association with the Communist fronts brought her into at least one public appearance with some of Israel's most dangerous enemies," a reference to Cole's attendance at a 1985 funeral for Alexandra Pollack that was also attended by a member of the PLO.

These charges against Cole are lowest form of insinuation. Cole has been attacked not for what she has done, not for what she believes, and not even for what right-wing groups and the FBI claim she believes, but for what they claim that organizations and individuals she has associated with believe. What Cole actually believes, let alone what she has *done* during her long career, has never been examined.

No one has accused Cole of being a poor president at Spelman, a historically black liberal arts women's college. No one suggests that she has imposed her views on anyone. But such considerations did not prevent Rosenthal from declaring that "her appointment was a mistake that should be explained. I hope she does not hang around government much longer. Propagandists for dictatorships don't suit my particular nose."

Most alarming of all has been the total acquiescence of liberals to these McCarthyite attacks. No one, except for syndicated columnist Carl Rowan, came to Cole's defense. No one pointed out the cheap shots and the meagre arguments of her critics. No one defended Cole's right to express her views without being banned from government service. The Clinton Administration has been particularly evasive, distancing itself from any hint of leftist ideology. Although Clinton officials called it "an unfair smear" and "part of the distant past," *The New York Times* reported, "Privately, transition officials are assuring questioners that Dr. Cole will have no say in setting Administration policy and will not be nominated to any top Administration position."

Ironically, the victim of all these attacks is not even a radical. Cole has sterling establishment credentials. She has worked with President Carter's Atlanta Project and the Atlanta Black/Jewish Coalition. She is a member of the board of Coca-Cola Enterprises, a founding director of George Bush's Points of Light Foundation, and a board member of the Citizens and Southern Georgia Corporation, the Atlanta Symphony, and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

A double standard exists in the PC debate. If Cole had been a conservative attacked by the left, the McCarthyism directed at her certainly would have inspired a massive outpouring of protest in the national media against "political correctness." Cole would have become another anecdote about the Orwellian leftist thought police. But she is a liberal, and a black woman, and so the assaults go unnoticed.

Forty years ago, when America was in the midst of the McCarthy Era and charges like this were regularly made, professors who refused to submit to the House Un-American Activities Committee's inquisitions were often fired. Senator Joseph McCarthy claimed that 28 percent of top collaborators in the communist-front movement were college faculty and that 3,000 professors were "guilty by collaboration."

These are the crimes Cole is accused of committing: speaking her mind, disagreeing with U.S. foreign policy, and fraternizing with people who have unorthodox ideas. These accusations have ruined our chance to have an exciting, intelligent leader in the Clinton cabinet. They have also shown us the other kind of "political correctness," the insinuation machine that starts whenever anyone with a "radical" past comes into the public spotlight. When qualified individuals can have their political careers ruined by charges of "association" with "Communist-front" groups, it shows how little we have progressed since the McCarthy Era. The temptation to censor, to punish people who hold different views on political questions, and to condemn individuals because of who they associate with, remains as strong as ever.

John K. Wilson, a graduate student in Social Thought at the University of Chicago, is writing a book on The Myth of Political Correctness.

conference report

Post-Cheney Culture Prospects

Judith Stacey

ONE of the first self-indulgent fantasies this left, feminist academic allowed herself after Clinton's victory was the vision of a respite from the culture wars. Among my morning-after activist daydreams was a scheme to goad Teachers for a Democratic Culture and Union of Democratic Intellectuals (UDI) into hosting a farewell banquet for Lynne Cheney, William Bennett, Anne Imelda Radice and their anti-PC brigades. We would have had to work quickly. It took Cheney less than a month to announce that she would resign from the NEH to evade the political isolation she anticipates under Clintonian cultural politics.

Just three days after the election, I attended the meetings of the American Studies Association, a professional organization that has become a haven for the sort of progressive and multicultural intellectual projects that Cheney and company worked so hard to suppress. A host of lively sessions offered reassuring evidence that these Reagan-Bush monocultural warriors had failed to stem an irreversible tide of oppositional intellectual projects germinated by the social movements of the sixties—ethnic studies, women's studies, gay and lesbian studies, cultural studies.

But I attended one session which inoculated me against premature complacency. Titled, "Change of Course for American Studies," its organizers sought to dislodge "the burden of ideology which has impeded the development of the field." Five white men in suits and ties blanketed the dais, a perverse achievement given the multicultural demographics of the conference participants. It soon became clear that resentment on the part of white, straight male intellectuals was the session's foundational premise. Historian John Diggins complained that the only people really excluded in American Studies these days are conservatives. But it was a loathsome diatribe, "Queer Revolution: The Last Stage of Radicalism," delivered by post-New Leftist, now neocon convert, David Horowitz, that fatally punctured my post-election myopia. This paranoid harangue excoriated gay studies—along with multiculturalism, feminism, and all social construction theories—for leading inexorably to nihilism, totalitarianism and extermination. Horowitz portrayed liberatory intellectual projects as a "war against civilization and nature" and white male students as the true victims on U.S. campuses, "regularly and routinely verbally abused," and subjected to "widespread intimidation." Later, well-scrubbed and suited male disciples from his Center for the study of Popular Culture distributed gratis copies of their guru's polemic along with complimentary issues of *Heterodoxy*, his slick new right-wing rag.

This encounter was a bracing reminder that Clinton's victory is no cause for complacency on the part of progressive scholars and cultural workers. Indeed, such complacency is one of the greatest dangers a Clinton administration poses, for it would undermine recently-organized resistance to assaults on democratic educational access and projects at a critical moment. The very economic crisis that underwrote the Bush defeat has been decimating public higher education. With access restricted through fee hikes and draconian staff and service cutbacks, with job prospects bleak even for those who jump through the hoops, the fate of hard-won multicultural curricular and institutional gains is precarious. Economic anxiety inflames racial, gender, and sexual resentments on campuses, as in the broader culture. As the David Horowitz panel and Jerry Falwell's talk of reviving his Moral Majority make clear, the Clinton victory will incite New Right cultural warriors to redouble their efforts to exploit these reactionary sentiments.

It would be tragic if Clinton's victory lulled leftist intellectuals into the kind of false security that demobilized many feminist reproductive rights supporters after *Roe v. Wade*. We will have mainly ourselves to blame if we miss the opportunity a Clinton administration offers to link our vision of a democratic culture to a movement to restore democratic access to university education. Continuing the sort of self-critique of political correctness that *Socialist Review* has promoted is one crucial component of this effort. Restoring and expanding student scholarship and loan programs is another. Challenging the corporate model of university administrative compensation levels is a third. And the list is long. I hope many will join me in TDC, UDI and local efforts to restore and revitalize the endangered species of public higher education. That would be cause for a banquet.

Judith Stacey teaches sociology at the University of California at Riverside.

NEWSCLIPS

Lamar Alexander and the Bush Department of Education (and a threat not to accredit the accrediting agency), Middle States backed down and the diversity standard was dropped. But the NAS, fearful that "politically correct" accrediting agencies might take over higher education, started planning for their own accrediting agency (with a $100,000 Olin Foundation grant). The new "academy" is the result of their reaction.

Jeffrey Wallin, president of the academy, says, "We weren't founded to go to battle with political correctness, but to improve undergraduate education." But John Agresto, chairman of the academy and president of St. John's College in New Mexico, says, "True liberal education and political correctness could not be more polar opposites." In other words, the AALE's purpose *is* to go to battle with political correctness—defined as anything smacking of multiculturalism, feminism, gay studies, or any other "politicized" topic.

AALE claims to have the cure for what ails higher education. But unless it gets off its ideological hobbyhorse and focuses on the quality of education, rather than how conservative the college catalog is, this accrediting agency will be nothing more than an official rubberstamper of *The National Review College Guide: America's 50 Top Liberal Arts Schools*. Neither students nor colleges will get a better education.

—John K. Wilson

Sheldon Hackney: New Hope for the NEH

Sheldon Hackney, president of the University of Pennsylvania, is the Clinton Administration's choice to head the National Endowment for the Humanities. Some hints about how he may lead the NEH are given by an article he wrote for the July-August 1990 *Academe*, titled "The NEA Under Attack: Resisting the Big Chill."

Hackney criticized the attempts to control artistic freedom, declaring that "what was envisioned was the conscious politicization of the NEA. That way lies madness and mediocrity." He stated his conviction that "open expression is a fundamental principle for a university and that it must not be compromised." However, Hackney also noted: "My own career is built on know-

NEWSCLIPS

ing when and when not to compromise. I generally see compromise as a virtue, but I get very nervous when fundamental principles are at stake. In those cases, one must be very careful that the compromise, if necessary, does not involve things of substance."

Hackney also praised the NEA's peer review system: "The system worked just as the original act of twenty-five years ago had intended for it to work—in a nonpolitical manner, using professional judgments and criteria having to do with artistic merit."

Hackney's article expressed the fear that censorship against the NEA could be extended to higher education: "All of the arguments being made for putting blinders on the NEA could also be made with regard to the university as a whole, using as leverage the federal financial aid programs and research support on which universities have come to depend."

Hackney concluded his essay by writing, "the best protection we have found for democracy is an unregulated market in expression. Such a fundamental commitment to intellectual freedom has served us well for over two hundred years and is our best hope for the next two hundred as well."

After Lynne Cheney's politicization of the NEH, Hackney's words are a refreshing defense of free expression without hypocrisy. When the NEA controversy reached his own campus, Hackney supported the NEA-funded exhibit of Mapplethorpe's photos at the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art.

Hackney has also repudiated the false charges of widespread "political correctness." In a 1991 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article, he argued that "campuses aren't besieged by Politically Correct Storm Troopers" and added, "Happily, I can report that such fears are greatly exaggerated." Hackney concluded, "a university must not be captured by any orthodoxy—except a devotion to the freedom of inquiry."

If Hackney runs the NEH according to these principles of academic freedom and non-political control, it points to a much better future for the NEH. If Hackney remains true to his word, he will speak out for freedom of expression and help to end the unspoken self-censorship which currently clouds both the NEA and the NEH.

—John K. Wilson

Dissenting from the Dissenters

Tim Brennan

DOES the "PC" charge have substance? I just wrote an essay for *American Literary History* denying it did, at least very much, but now wish I had reconsidered. Barbara Epstein, quoted in *Democratic Culture*'s last issue, describes PC as "an intersection of identity politics and moralism," whose result is "a process of self-intimidation" that "close[s] down debate." I agree with this charge. I want to give a few examples of the forms I have seen it take, and then situate the problem in a way that no one, I think, has openly considered.

Let us take the case of Camille Paglia's highly publicized book, *Sex, Politics, and American Culture*. If one tries to point out that, in addition to the book's indefensible outbursts—its denial of the reality of date rape, its defense of snuff films, its proto-fascist urgings for an unleashed "nature"—there is also an incomparably rich expressiveness, a lively (and overdue) savaging of academic cronyism and bluff, and a convincing defense of a "generalist" knowledge which is not listened to in the circles I know. In the opinion of many, to say these things is to be insufficiently vigilant, or to conceal a hostility toward feminism itself. Anyone who attempts to say them is often simply told to shut up. Intolerance like this not only lacks a sense of shading, it is also politically damaging since Paglia's appeal (her rather different message in the end from that of Cheney, Bloom & Co.) needs to be learned from. It needs also to be matched in kind, something which—she accurately points out—few of us trained in the ponderous rigor of both continental philosophy and late American bureaucratese are able to do.

Here quickly are a few further examples of the PC I think Epstein was referring to:

1) During a gathering at a prominent Humanities Institute, a participant questions the separatisms of identity politics by quoting Trinh Minh-ha's insider/outsider essay to the effect that "you don't have to be one to know one." At this point, a famous academic in attendance loudly guffaws, gets up, and stomps out of the room, effectively silencing the speaker. When the final essays for the project are compiled for an anthology representing the Institute's work that term, the essay of the one who spoke up is eliminated under the usual extenuating circumstances.

2) After receiving a harsh letter to the editor about an essay by one of their collective (who is Pakistani), the editors of a reputable journal of politics and popular culture at first deny the respondent the right to revise the letter in the name of (as they put it) "third world solidarity."

3) According to reports by members of the recruitment committee, a successful novelist and Marxist scholar of postmodernism is denied a post at a prominent midwestern university because two faculty members (one a man, one a woman) "didn't feel included" in the way he discussed sexual desire in his critical exposure of recent white male rampage films.

Small potatoes for the most part? Yes, but there are many examples like these, and they already have attained the cumulative force of suppressing some scholars' visibility, hurting their chances at promotion, or denying them access to employment. As in the case above, a pluralism that demands everyone always be "included" is repressive, even though these repressions have never reached the levels claimed by the right. Nor are these repressions comparable to the usual *Berufsverboten* against progressive teachers in the academy, which is not (despite most recent commentary) limited to the McCarthy years, but is a standard practice of American intellectual life. So, on the one hand, the threat to fledgling undergraduates by the chilling of discussion about Paglia, although real, is vastly overstated; but the more meaningful discrimination—against a kind of left in the profession which is at present unauthorized—is simply unimportant to the conservatives, and so never enters the debate as such, although its energies are cathected onto the imaginary injuries of the young Republican held captive in the new Stanford humanities core course.

What's wrong is seeing this identity politics as the work of an overdiligent "left" that is injuring others out of its own fanaticisms. By "identity politics" I mean insisting on the unique viability of the local over the "total"; requiring that we "situate ourselves" in the enclosed space of gender, race, or nationality; opposing on principle "speaking for" others; rejecting univocal readings as a "colonizing" of texts; and dismissing nature as a category within culture by insisting, again on principle, on the "construction" of all subjectivity. This is not the place to critique each of these stands in turn, only to observe the practices that often accompany them.

The PC which I gave examples of above, I am saying, is not the work of reformers who (as the

familiar god-that-failed narrative goes) mistake their own ardent sense of justice for permission to discriminate. It is instead the work of an avant garde which, as avant gardes tend to do, opposes the left with many of the same cliched impulses as Roger Kimball. When *The New Criterion* shouts that "radicals" have taken over the English department, we shout back "no," we say that's an exaggeration, we claim that despite some inroads, nothing much has changed. But when we look at the profiles of the profession's stars, the titles of forthcoming books, and the credentials in the most coveted posts, what we always took for radicalism has in fact found a prominence that no one can call weak, inchoate, or even (precisely speaking) embattled. It is already too strong for that. But we were right the first time: Nothing much has changed. Derrida fits too well somehow with Cleanth Brooks, Foucault with Lionel Trilling.

No one wants to say it, but we have basically two camps sharing the seat of power, and fighting over spoils. Forgetting for a moment the infinite variations within camps, the older humanist guard at, say, Harvard, the NEH, journals like *Raritan* or papers like *The New York Review of Books* complements in a specific and restricted sense the "usurpers" at Duke, the Institute of Advanced Studies, the Cornell Humanities Center, or Routledge Press. Their fights are real, but both groups are quite comfortable getting media attention while gearing up to stifle or ridicule the theoretical outlooks and institutional proposals of what they scornfully call the "Old Left." Old Left outlooks and proposals in the end are much more difficult for those in privilege to swallow, since they talk about things like school funding, red-lining, English-only laws, and educational *access* rather than about disciplinary contents or methodologies. They talk about these things while placing them in a history of labor, of capital's plans for us, of a fight by many local people for a *total* vision and system of life—the only one relevant to an era of corporate globalization.

Contrary to the ill-informed press, which has publicly identified "theory" as a creature of the left, it is both the recent wave of conservative campaigners as well as most poststructuralisms that (albeit without any sense of common purpose) weed out, silence, chill, and mock positions that still speak prominently of class interests, of a correspondence between language and the world, of the necessity of orienting oneself in respect to a broad public (a "people"), and of the impossibility of progress if there are not forms of collective action. These are views that Richard Rorty, of all people, was correct to point out recently in *Dissent* are difficult to oppose if one wants still to conceive of change as a goal. Of course all people, including the politicians of identity, have the right to their opinions; but then as now the hostilities towards the Old Left have not been carried out solely with a pen. Despite enormous local differences (and the scenario I am giving probably does not fit some schools or departments), the tendency is not to chart new paths but to join a venerable American tradition of busting commie chops—a place where the old and new meet in a new PC.

PC has little merit as a charge of abuse against those who challenge bigots or sexual harassers. A lot of post-Bloom/Bennett commentators have expressed that thought brilliantly. What they forget to add is that PC has quite a lot of merit as a charge against the cosmetically improved red-baiting that often occurs under the auspices of "left" theory.

Tim Brennan teaches English at SUNY-Stony Brook.

WRITE FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

We need your submissions to create this newsletter. The next issue of *Democratic Culture* will appear early in the fall, so we must receive your contributions during the summer. We are looking for letters, essays, book reviews, and reports from universities on the latest events of interest to our members. If possible, for longer articles please send a disk with the article (saved in ASCII or text format). Send your submissions to:

Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405
Evanston, IL 60204

NEWSCLIPS

D'Souza's Delusions about Ohio State

In *Illiberal Education*, Dinesh D'Souza wrote: "Some colleges, such as Ohio State University, are going beyond a single requirement: they are overhauling the entire curriculum to reflect what they call 'issues of race, ethnicity, and gender.'" Like much of D'Souza's book, this turns out to be a gross exaggeration and distortion of the facts. Jeff Grabmeier, associate editor at the Ohio State Office of University Communications, writes in the November 1992 *USA Today* magazine that, contrary to D'Souza's account, the curriculum change "hasn't created the controversy that similar changes caused elsewhere." Grabmeier notes that as of September 1991, "All students are required to take a social diversity class that will give special attention to race, gender, class, and ethnicity in the U.S. The curriculum also encourages them to study other cultures to meet requirements in the arts and humanities." Robert Arnold, associate provost for curriculum and instruction, declares, "I'm very comfortable with the curriculum at Ohio State because it doesn't force any one viewpoint on students. What we're after at Ohio State is a balance."

Even conservative critics of PC appear satisfied. Grabmeier notes, "Williamson Murray, a professor of history and NAS member, admits he is suspicious of the new social diversity requirement because these courses could become 'ideologically centered.' Over all, however, he thinks the new curriculum still has a strong basis in science and humanities and is not cluttered with the politicized courses that he sees at other colleges. 'I would argue that we stayed in a centrist position, without a lot of the silly requirements found at some schools.'"

—John K. Wilson

The Other Political Correctness

The endless recycling of horrifying anecdotes has been one of the most effective devices used by conservatives to convince the public that a PC monster exists. But when it's radicals who are being censored, a short article appears in *The New York Times* or *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the issue is quickly forgotten.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NEWSCLIPS

In 1991, for example, Stuart Reges, a computer science instructor at Stanford University, was fired after writing a letter to drug czar Bob Martinez opposing the government's drug war, and declaring that he violated federally imposed campus anti-drug regulations by carrying illegal drugs in his backpack.

More recently, Pauline Bart, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was suspended from teaching her classes for a semester after a student, whom Bart said was disruptive, complained of discrimination in a women's studies class. Although the issue was never resolved and the student never requested Bart's suspension, university officials deprived her of her classes, tried to negotiate for Bart's retirement, and now refuse to allow her classes to be cross-listed with women's studies.

Some of the most disturbing PC incidents come from religious universities. Cecilia Konchar Farr, assistant professor of English at Brigham Young University, was criticized by university officials after she spoke at an abortion rights rally and expressed her personal opposition to abortion along with her support for the right to choose. Although Farr clearly stated that she did not speak for Brigham Young University, officials put a letter in her record calling her a "poor university citizen" who had broken her promise not to oppose fundamental church doctrine. Other professors and students have been warned against expressing unorthodox doctrines. While some will say that a private or religious university can censor whoever it wants (which it can), this hardly excuses it from the moral obligation to engage in free discussion.

Another example of the "other" political correctness is the widespread discrimination against gays and lesbians. At Brigham Young, employees are forbidden to have sexual relationships that are not heterosexual marriages. At Bethel College, Kenneth Gowdy was fired after 21 years of teaching because—outside of class—he advocated lifelong relationships for homosexual partners, instead of condemning homosexuality entirely. At Auburn University, state lawmakers, university officials, and student government leaders have tried to stop students from forming a gay and lesbian student organization.

In the face of this bigotry, the critics of political correctness have been silent. In the few cases where public attention is directed to the censorship of leftists,

The Mugging of the Academic Left

Donald Lazere

CONSERVATIVE critics of the academic left have tried to claim the rhetorical high road with appeals to intellectual disinterestedness, nonpartisanship, and standards, against leftists' alleged debasement of these values. But much conservative criticism in practice bears the marks of the kind of partisan smear campaign that Republicans have specialized in from Nixon's dirty tricks to Bush's Willie Horton ploy and his cheap personal attacks on Clinton and Gore.

The scholarly writings of many of the leading academic Marxists and other "tenured radicals," in Roger Kimball's term, are determinedly nuanced, complex, and nondoctrinaire, but conservative critics and the media have stereotyped these scholars as a monolithic if not conspiratorial band of flakes and vulgar Marxist ideologues. Thus the crudeness is most often in the eye of the beholding, vulgar anti-Marxist critics themselves.

There are undeniably some doctrinaire academic leftists, and many whose arcane, jargon-ridden theorizing fully deserves ridicule, but they represent only one faction in the academic left, and those of us who oppose them get weary of being tarred by the same brush. In virtually every case, the more virulent critics of the academic left, mainly conservatives but some liberals, attack a leftist concept by presenting it in its most extreme-sounding formulation, a position which might actually be held by few but the most fringy leftists. Whether deliberate or not, this misrepresentation serves two rhetorical ends.

First, by posing issues in terms of absolute philosophical polarities rather than in the much more limited terms posed by most responsible leftists, it enables the critics to make high-minded defenses of commonsense positions against strawman left opponents. For example, critics accuse leftists of total skepticism or nihilism in denying the existence of any objective reality, which then leads them to advance their own partisan "truths" in the manner of Stalinist thought control. No reputable American academic leftist to my knowledge, however, advocates any such thing (and most, incidentally, have long been anti-communist, belying conservative red-baiting). Most simply study instances in which claims of objectivity in political or cultural issues have deliberately or unconsciously masked conservative ideological biases. Thus the critics' largely factitious attacks on an absolutist position enables them to evade evaluating (or even reading!) the full array of concrete supporting evidence that is the strong point of the best leftist scholarship.

Second, such misrepresentation, which ostensibly chastise leftists for polarizing intellectual and political life by taking extreme positions, actually serves to proliferate polarization. This works to the advantage of those conservatives who are forlorn without an evil empire

I myself have been compared to Klaus Barbie, the Nazi "Butcher of Lyons."

against which to wage holy war, whether in the Kremlin or the English department.

Conservatives like Kimball, Dinesh D'Souza, Allan Bloom, John Searle, and Lynne Cheney make no effort to read the writing of left scholars with any willingness to acknowledge valid points in them, or at enough length to evaluate the complete evidence, extended arguments, and qualifications on which their case is based. Instead, they go at texts with malice aforethought, like heat-seeking missiles searching for the most extreme-sounding passages to jerk out of context.

In his preface to *Tenured Radicals* (1990), Kimball's evidence of left extremism is a sentence on the first page of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* asserting that "the political perspective" is "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation"—without giving any subsequent indication he bothered to glance at the 300 supporting pages or at the many other works of Jameson, whose erudition and brilliance are internationally recognized. The same quotation appeared two years earlier in Cheney's tendentious NEH report, *Humanities in America* (wherein Cheney also gave no sign of having read further than page one of Jameson), so Kimball might have done no more than crib the quote from Cheney. This appears in the same breath in which Kimball huffs and puffs about left scholars' alleged "destruction of the values, methods and goals of traditional humanistic study."

Kimball finally got around to writing an extended critique of Jameson in the June 1991 *New Criterion*, but it consisted mainly of more of

Kimball's typical M.O.—glib oversimplifications of Jameson's complex arguments, derision substituting for rebuttal, and quotes taken out of context. For example, Kimball says Jameson "speaks of Maoism as the 'richest of all the great new ideologies of the 60s.'" However, he deletes Jameson's next sentence: "One understands, of course, why left militants here and abroad, fatigued by Maoist dogmatisms, must have heaved a collective sigh of relief when the Chinese turn [sic] consigned 'Maoism' itself to the dustbin of history."

I myself have been compared to Klaus Barbie, the Nazi "Butcher of Lyons," by Heritage Foundation syndicated columnist Don Feder, solely on the basis of a Los Angeles Times review of Kimball's *Tenured Radicals* enumerating Kimball's distortions. I am among the multitude of leftists maligned by Cheney in her final report as NEH chair, *Telling the Truth*, published late in 1992. Cheney charges that in my recent publications in defense of exposing students to left viewpoints in composition instruction, I am "determined to convert his students to his point of view. He has no intention of introducing them to other perspectives." She later adds, "It is hard to imagine the professor from California quoted above, the one who wants his students to view themselves as victims of big business and consumership, suggesting books and articles that would help students make a case for free markets."

Cheney deliberately misrepresents the article she cites, "Back to Basics: A Force for Oppression or Liberation?" in the January 1992 *College English*, which is in fact a critique of dogmatic leftist teaching. Cheney bases her accusation on a passage, quoted out of context, in which I say that in a course on argumentative and research writing, the ethnocentrism of conservative middle-class students can be challenged by exposing them to leftist sources. She doesn't mention this earlier passage: "Conservatives are correct in insisting that it is illegitimate for teachers to advocate a revolutionary or any other ideological position in a one-sided way and to force that position on students—and despite the tendentious exaggerations of conservative critics about the tyranny of left political correctness, this sometimes does occur."

Other publications of mine, including some cited in "Back to Basics," (which Cheney would have looked up if she were to practice the kind of scholarly standards she accuses leftists of abandoning) develop a method for enabling students to research and analyze leftist sources in rhetorical counterpoint to conservative ones—on issues like Reaganomic views on free markets—while avoiding taking sides in a way that would allow the instructor to grade on opinions rather than on a balanced summary of opposing arguments. See especially "Teaching the Political Conflicts: A Rhetorical Schema," *College Composition and Communication* (May 1992) and the introductory sections in my anthology *American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives* (University of California Press, 1987).

One of the most frequent targets in the assault against academic leftism and other recent theory is a 1989 American Council of Learned Societies report, *Speaking for the Humanities*, a rebuttal to Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and to Cheney's 1988 report *Humanities in America*, both of which had denounced the politicizing of humanistic studies and the left critique of ideological subjectivity. This report was written by five prominent literary scholars, George Levine, Peter Brooks, Jonathan Culler, Marjorie Garber, E. Ann Kaplan, and Catharine R. Stimpson (none of whom are radical leftists).

There seems to have been a competition among conservatives to find the most dishonest way of turning *Speaking for the Humanities* into a manifesto of left/deconstructionist nihilism.

There seems to have been a competition among conservatives to find the most dishonest way of turning *Speaking for the Humanities* into a manifesto of left/deconstructionist nihilism. In *Telling the Truth*, Cheney singles out a sentence fragment—"Claims of disinterest, objectivity, and universality are not to be trusted"—which is admittedly a rash generalization in isolation, but carefully qualified in the context she pulls it out of. Elsewhere the ACLS report explains, "All parties believe that the truth is on their ideological side. 'Objectivity' and 'disinterest' are often the means by which the equation of truth and particular ideological positions can be disguised." Granting the qualifiers "often" and "can be," who could disagree? Well, precisely those like Cheney who seem convinced that conservative beliefs are not a partisan ideology but simply "telling the truth."

Defending *The Closing of the American Mind* against critics in its sequel, *Giants and Dwarfs*, Bloom wrote: "The Closing was brought before this inquisition and condemned to banishment

NEWSCLIPS

it is usually to justify silencing them. One famous case concerns Leonard Jeffries at City College of New York.

In the summer of 1991, Jeffries' anti-Semitic remarks in a public speech caused the CUNY trustees to retain Jeffries as chair of the Afro-American Studies department for a special eight-month term, and then later remove him from that position. Many politicians thought this was eight months too many. Senator Alfonse D'Amato of New York said, "Jeffries should have been removed as chairman of the department," and Governor Mario Cuomo said the condemnation of Jeffries by City College was less than had been warranted. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan declared of Jeffries, "He ought to resign. If he does not, certainly the trustees should." Legislators summoned City College officials to a hearing, and according to *The New York Times*, "demanded to know why Professor Jeffries has remained chairman of the Afro-American Studies Department and why he was still teaching at City College at all." Even the liberal *New York Times* wrote an editorial demanding that Jeffries be fired from his job as chair, calling his opinions "unsubstantiated remarks" and saying his punishment would be "a healing of the tensions."

The bigotry of Leonard Jeffries' ravings should not conceal the threats this action poses to academic freedom. The reaction against Jeffries was clearly caused by his remarks outside the classroom. If professors must watch what they say on their own time or face political retribution, then their freedom of speech and our freedom to listen will be imperiled. When another controversial City College professor, Michael Levin, was investigated by university officials (but not punished) for his racist views, a Federal Court ruled that his First Amendment rights had been violated. Jeffries' rights are equally protected. His offensive remarks should be refuted rather than punished.

Some of the victims of the "other" political correctness are rightly criticized for their beliefs or pedagogical practices. But this cannot excuse the intimidation and repression of their views. "Political correctness" is political correctness, whether done at a private or a public university, by leftists or conservatives, for religious or ideological reasons. All examples of PC should be condemned.

—*John K. Wilson*

NEWSCLIPS

The Imaginary Word Police

"Instead of allowing free discussion and debate to occur, many gung-ho advocates of politically correct language seem to think that simple suppression of a word or concept will magically make the problem disappear."

That's what Michiko Kakutani claims in a recent *New York Times* article (February 1, 1993), "The Word Police Are Listening For 'Incorrect' Language," which examines several books on bias-free language.

Kakutani attacks "the P.C. police" and "the language police" who advance "the prohibition of certain words, phrases and ideas" in the name of harmony. But Kakutani claims this all comes "at the cost of freedom of expression and freedom of speech" and even "the ideals of individualism and democracy." This dire crisis of the Word Police might be more alarming if it had any basis in reality, rather being distortions and exaggerations.

One of Kakutani's targets, Rosalie Maggio, wrote in *The Dictionary of Bias-Free Usage* (Onyx Press, 1991), "At least once you will find an entry that causes you to smite your forehead and say, 'How petty can you get!'" Maggio doesn't suggest that everyone should be forced to follow every recommendation in her book, nor is she biased in her usage: Outing gets called "a controlling, violent, and dominating act," and redneck is called "classist, judgmental, inflammatory, and used mostly of men." And if you don't like Maggio's recommendations, you can ignore her; there's no Word Police out there waiting to crash down your door and search your hard disk for offending material.

Another victim of the Word Police fantasy is a pamphlet handed out by the Smith College Office of Student Affairs to incoming students in 1990. It included some uncontroversial definitions explaining racism, classism, ethnocentrism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and religious discrimination in standard ways. But because of words like ageism, ableism, heterosexism, and most of all "lookism," the pamphlet has been widely ridiculed.

Lookism, the pamphlet explained, is "the belief that appearance is an indicator of a person's value; the construction of a standard for beauty/attractiveness; and oppression through stereotypes and generalizations of both those who do not fit that standard and those who from the land of the learned. The American Council of Learned Societies even issued a report written by a panel of the new men and women which declared that there is now a scholarly consensus, nay, a proof, that all classic texts must be studied using a single approved method. Such texts are, we are ordered to believe, expressions of the unconscious class, gender, or race prejudices of their authors. The calling of the humanities in our day is to liberate us from the sway of these authors and their prejudices; Shakespeare and Milton, among others, are mentioned in the report." Cheney similarly claims that *Speaking for the Humanities* "hold[s] up Milton simply to display his sexism."

Compare Bloom's and Cheney's accounts with the actual text of the ACLS report, whose pertinent passages I quote in their essence:

> Allan Bloom's disturbingly popular *The Closing of the American Mind* seems, for example, to attribute major moral and social changes in America to the failure of the humanities to insist on and teach the great philosophical tradition from Plato through Rousseau. Neither Bloom nor any of the other major denigrators of the condition of the humanities disciplines in higher education attends to the possibility that changes in curriculum as well as changes in the social and moral structure of our society might reflect America's changing position in the world economic community or the emergence of non-Western powers on the world scene....
>
> Critics of the state of the humanities today charge that an interest in theory, and in the claims of feminist, Afro-American, and Third World studies, for example, has produced thinking that is ideologically grounded, to the detriment of their own kind of objective and disinterested study....At its best, contemporary humanistic thinking does not peddle ideology, but rather attempts to sensitize us to the presence of ideology in our work, and to its capacity to delude us into promoting as universal values that in fact belong to one nation, one social class, one sect.
>
> *Humanities in America* contends that scholarly emphasis on politics, gender, race, and class does not bring students to an understanding of how Milton or Shakespeare speaks to the deepest concerns we all have as human beings....But...those writers were themselves working, often very consciously, within the political sphere....
>
> When viewed historically texts are most fully humanized, and the strangenesses in them become accessible in new ways. Surely this is true for *Macbeth*, written by Shakespeare when his company was under the protection of King James I, formerly James IV of Scotland, a king who had written extensively about both tyranny and witchcraft....The famous passage in *Paradise Lost*, in which Milton distinguishes between Adam and Eve by saying 'hee for God only, she for God in him' should obviously not be passively accepted as authoritative and 'timeless,' but needs to be read as the articulation of his own culture's view, as part of a history with which we still contend.

These and other examples of historically and ideologically situated aspects of works by Shakespeare and Milton are presented without the least hint of banning or denigrating these authors, fixating solely on their prejudices, or implying that the political is the "single approved method" for their study. On the contrary: "Far from constituting an abandonment of the humanistic concern with values, the best work characteristic of the humanities today has renewed debates on value, indeed on the ethics of what we study and how we study it....There is no reason why the humanities cannot continue to foster knowledge of the great traditions of the past—of its books and artifacts and the values they embody—while simultaneously pursuing an inquiry into how we understand what we read and observe."

D'Souza, in an excerpt from *Illiberal Education* printed in *The Atlantic*, attributes to *Speaking for the Humanities* the opinion that "democracy cannot be justified as a system of government inherently superior to totalitarianism; it is simply an 'ideological commitment' that the West has chosen to make." Compare D'Souza's account with the portion of the text in question:

"To locate ideology is not necessarily to condemn. In America, for instance, everyone would be likely to agree that we want our students to learn 'to appreciate democracy,' and we design our curricula with this objective. So we teach in ways that other countries, with other objectives, would not. We may wish to argue that a commitment to democracy is *not* ideological but a recognition of a universal truth, disinterestedly achieved, and unavailable to other more parti-

TDC Conference Spring 1994, Chicago ...Watch for further announcements

san cultures. This, ironically, makes the non-authoritarian democratic system entirely dependent on an asserted authority. We ought to be—and we are—able to defend our ideological commitments without recourse to such arguments. A firm recognition of our own interests, and of the fact that in teaching democratic principles we are being ideological strengthens rather than weakens our position and our capacity to learn and teach."

What in the report is a defense of open-minded inquiry into the topic of ideological subjectivity is deliberately misrepresented by Bloom, D'Souza, and Cheney as commissarial imposition of left-wing ideology or the nihilistic claim that all beliefs and values are wholly subjective and arbitrary. In a similar distortion of the ACLS report and the general position it speaks for, John Searle in *The New York Review of Books* reduced that position to two alleged "assumptions": "that the Western tradition is oppressive, and that the main purpose of teaching the humanities is political transformation," with the corollary that "the very ideal of excellence implied in the canon is itself perceived as a threat." Responsible left scholars are more inclined to phrase their goal as emphasizing significant political dimensions of culture that mainstream American society and education avoid—the avoidance itself tacitly bolstering conservative ideology. However, the leftists' attempt merely to bring to light heretofore unperceived biases in the cultural mainstream is stood on its head by conservatives claiming that the problem is these leftists who are inordinately fixated on politics and trying to impose their own biases on the mainstream.

As for Searle's travestied account of left views on excellence and oppression, leftists themselves are more inclined to pose questions like these: Aren't criteria of excellence and moral (as opposed to scientific) truth, as well as the interpretation of historical facts, to a large extent contingent on the ideological biases of particular times, classes, and cultures, and isn't it plausible that such contingent criteria help perpetuate the power of dominant groups over others? For example, has the actual incidence of discrimination against dominated groups in Western and American history been downplayed in traditional humanistic education? To what extent have canonical literary texts, along with scholarship about them, been biased in favor of Western, white males and upper classes? To what degree have the contributions of women, workers, non-white and non-Western people to world culture been overlooked or their excellence underestimated? One cannot imagine that even conservative intellectuals would deny *a priori* the validity of scholars open-mindedly exploring these questions, as large numbers have been doing. Their findings must be evaluated on the basis of an equally open-minded reading of each individual's works, not on the basis of sweeping generalizations by critics who show scant familiarity with those works.

Donald Lazere teaches English at Cal Poly. His previous criticisms of the conservative assault on the cultural left have appeared in Profession 89, The Chronicle of Higher Education *(November 9, 1988 and June 13, 1990)*, The New York Times Book Review *(December 17, 1989)*, College English *(March 1992)*, *and* In These Times *(May 27, 1992)*.

Two Views of Dinesh D'Souza

"The most extensive critical study yet made of an academic convulsion... Agree with it or not, [this book] deserves serious attention."—C. Vann Woodward, July 18, 1991 *New York Review of Books* (reprinted on the back cover of the paperback edition of *Illiberal Education*).

"When I first wrote on the book I accepted its purely factual statements as true; on the whole, for a subject so heatedly debated up to the last moment, the investigation seemed reasonably thorough, the rhetoric comparatively temperate, and the documentation fairly detailed, if sometimes very selective. Unfortunately, the book turned out to contain some serious and irresponsible factual errors."—C. Vann Woodward, revised essay (in Patricia Aufderheide's anthology, *Beyond PC*).

NEWSCLIPS

do." But none of the critics have explained exactly what is so terrible about this definition. Do they believe appearance never influences how people are treated? Do they think people should be fired from jobs because of how they look?

Instead of making arguments, these critics speculate about the specter of the Word Police. In Kakutani's article, a paragraph on speech codes is inserted between descriptions of two anti-bias handbooks, even though no one is forced to use inclusive language. The Smith College pamphlet, which was never imposed on anyone, has been presented as totalitarian or simply idiotic. Even the Random House Dictionary was recently attacked for including words like "womyn" in its pages.

Unfortunately, the debate has been distorted by those who think dictionaries must produce prescriptive declarations of what words we ought to use. Nothing is further from the truth. A dictionary describes the current use of language; for example, the 10th edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary includes obscenities, racial slurs, and even "politically correct." And if feminists use "womyn" in their writings, dictionaries ought to tell us what it means, not censor it for the sake of ridiculous fears about the Word Police. These terms may be silly, but silliness has never meant suppression.

Even the critics of bias-free language handbooks will admit that there is a moral responsibility to avoid needlessly offensive phrases. But when someone tries to provide guidance about which words are considered offensive, debate is shut off by condemnations of "Orwellian" thought police. It's time to start discussing the issue, not dismissing it.

—John K. Wilson

The Higher Cost of Higher Education

Public resentment at the rising costs of higher education has provided an effective weapon for conservatives attacking universities. For parents paying higher tuition, students shut out of classes, and state legislators who watch public universities demand more and more money, the frustration over complicated issues of poor management and waste in higher education can be more easily dealt with by using "political correctness" and leftist professors as scapegoats.

Democratic Culture — Page 9

NEWSCLIPS

This resentment became clear last fall, when the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families (chaired by liberal Democrat Patricia Schroeder) made a scathing indictment of higher education in a report called, "College Education: Paying More and Getting Less."

The report noted that during the 1980s, tuition rose by more than twice the rate of inflation despite large increases in endowments and government support, and the trends are expected to continue. For 1991-92, public universities increased tuition and fees by 12 percent, while the inflation rate was only 3.2 percent. The report blames colleges for trying "to emulate the research-dominated model of higher education," which "would cost a lot of money and teaching students would have to take a back seat" to research. The report also attacked the increasing presence of teaching assistants and "extraordinary [*sic*] large classes" and described a TA strike at Berkeley in 1989 which caused the cancellation of nearly 75 percent of classes.

The report concluded we must "face the reality that the system can no longer afford to keep research in its preeminent position and relegate teaching to the status of an unwanted orphan." It declared that "skyrocketing prices, ignored undergraduates, vastly reduced teaching loads, and bloated administrative staffs" had hastened the conclusion that "higher education has lost sight of its purpose to educate the public."

Another criticism of higher education is offered by Jon Meacham in the May 1993 *Washington Monthly*. Meacham declares, "Since the seventies, average faculty workloads have dropped from 15 hours a week to about 6, and college costs have risen at five or six times the rate of inflation." Both numbers are obviously grossly exaggerated, but Meacham's argument is a common one: Professors spend too much time doing useless research, and too little time teaching.

But "research" is taking the blame for many problems it hasn't caused. The current crisis in many state universities is due to declining funding by state legislatures. Many financial problems for students and parents are caused by the sharp decline in federal financial aid during the 1980s, which forced colleges to raise tuition costs to fund their own financial aid programs. The allegedly dramatic increases in professors' salaries followed real decreases in salaries during the early 1970s. The drop in

review

Liberalism and Multiculturalism

Gregory Jay

TDC members seeking reasonable voices in the debate over the politics of multiculturalism could begin with the essays of Peter Erickson, author of *Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama* and *Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves*. In his article on "Multiculturalism and the Problem of Liberalism" in *Reconstruction* 2:1 (1992), Erickson argues that "Conventional liberalism has shown itself unable to produce its own distinctive response to contemporary cultural change." Left-liberals such as Irving Howe, C. Vann Woodward, John Searle, and Arthur Schlesinger (and, one might add, virtually everyone now associated with *Partisan Review*) echo the neoconservative line on cultural politics, often relying uncritically on sources like Dinesh D'Souza. The individualism central to the tradition of American liberalism appears incapable of absorbing the critique which argues that this individualism has often excluded whole groups from its rights and powers. Thus, liberals have been ripe for co-option by the conservatives, who provide the anti-multiculturalist, anti-feminist, anti-theory liberals with most of their arguments.

Erickson notes that two prominent black liberals, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Cornel West, offer strong alternatives to the marriage with neoconservatism. Schlesinger confuses multiculturalism with Afrocentrism and other tyrannical absolutisms threatening to liberal individual freedom. Gates, too, criticizes black essentialism, but as Erickson points out, Gates also targets the racism of traditional liberalism. Gates writes: "Recognizing that what had passed for 'the human' or 'the universal' was in fact white essentialism, we substituted one sort of essentialism (that of 'blackness') for another. That, we learned quickly enough, was just not enough."

In place of the debilitating liberal-conservative convergence, Erickson promotes a liberal-radical interaction: "I have no desire to adopt the false comfort of a singleminded radical standpoint from which to engage in liberal bashing. But I think liberalism must be held to higher intellectual standards." Multiculturalists, however, must also answer radical critics who (perhaps to the puzzlement of Schlesinger and company) see the movement as too easily contained by the status quo. In an essay on "What Multiculturalism Means" (in *Transition* no. 55), Erickson argues that we must "undo the equation of multicultural with liberal" or pluralist, and reattach "the term radical to a multicultural stance." A radical multiculturalism will be anti-racist, will pursue conflict as well as consensus, and will reflect critically on its own institutional context and practices: "The shift from exclusion to inclusion of minority cultures accomplishes only the illusion of progress if it is based on a superficial pluralism that becomes another way of maintaining the status quo. This move [pluralism] offers an image of unity in diversity in which the overall controlling power of the established tradition is not disrupted or altered by the admission of emergent minority traditions. But the strong version of multiculturalism entails this disruption: it does not posit a master tradition that organizes the others."

These essays leave us with the question still vexing the cultural politics of higher education: How will knowledge be organized and taught in the absence of "a master tradition"? Getting educators, administrators, and the general public to abandon a monolithic canon as an organizing principle has proven very difficult in practice. It won't get easier if radicals insist on replacing one essentialist, biased tradition with another (or group of others). It might help if radicals borrowed a page from the conservative playbook, and started co-opting the best ideals of the liberal tradition for the radical cause. Multiculturalism does make claims based on concepts of right, justice, freedom, equality, and liberty, even as it denounces the flaws and abuses of these notions in the past. Better to claim and renovate these liberal ideals than to abandon them to the neoconservatives.

Gregory Jay teaches English at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

What's Your Opinion?

TDC plans to write and distribute position papers on the various controversies about higher education. We encourage members or chapters of TDC to submit possible position papers, or ideas about the stands we should take and the issues we should focus on.

interview

Thoughts on Political Correctness

The following interview with Todd Gitlin is excerpted from Freedom Review, *September-October 1992:*

FREEDOM REVIEW: What do you make of the current uproar over political correctness? Is it all a media creation or is there a point there?

TODD GITLIN: There is a point. There is such a thing as political correctness and it's deplorable. But the genius of the right here was to clump three phenomena together—affirmative action, canon revisions, and speech codes—and to define the issue so that there were only two positions available: For and against. This kind of bifurcation refuses to recognize a whole range of other possible positions. There are certain people in favor of certain canon revisions but not others, for certain affirmative action but not others, for certain speech codes but not others. There are people who support canon revisions but are against speech codes, and so on.

Really, it was quite ingenious for the right to present itself as the exponent of universal values, of individual liberties, and of general verity and standards, while the left, often enough, portrayed itself as a sum of differences, dismissing any need for a common discourse or common culture.

...I would insist also the alarm that was sounded about the reach of PC constitutes a kind of hysteria. It was a media-fed hysteria. There is some fire behind the smoke, but if you follow the stories through the *Newsweek* cover story, *The New York Times*, *New York* Magazine, Dinesh D'Souza and so on, a lot of these stories do not hold up. A lot of them are exaggerated. A lot of them are old news. A lot of them can be construed differently. And the sum of them—"the thought police," "the new McCarthyism" as *Newsweek* called it—this is outlandish and hysterical.

There is a real intolerance on the left, there are orthodoxies, and so on. On the other hand, the notion that the academy has been seized by cabals of superannuated radicals from the sixties is, in general, utterly false. The deconstruction exotics have taken the limelight, while in economics, most of political science, literature, and so on gravitate as usual toward unsurprising conventions. In certain disciplines you will, of course, find a higher representation of remnants of political movements of the 'sixties. And even there, by the way, you will find very few erstwhile activists of the sixties among the so-called politically correct faculty. Very, very few activists.

...One of the things that is so disingenuous about the anti-PC hysteria is the presumption that political correctness was invented by the left circa 1981 or whatever. There is always a political orthodoxy around. When I was in college, the political orthodoxy was basically conservative, except for certain fields. Now one goes to an MLA convention and hears the predictable range of papers about race, class, gender, sexual preference, and so on; you could program a computer to write those annual articles, and I am sure somebody has. But one would have found other sorts of orthodoxies if one went to MLA conventions twenty years ago. It's the hysteria that I think is outlandish....

FR: Do you think Berkeley's new American Cultures requirement is a step in the right direction?

TG: I think it's fine to have students do comparative studies of ethnic groups. I think it peculiar, however, that we have this requirement when we have, as yet, no requirement in world history or philosophy. There are many students here that have only the most flimsy and provisional, or even wrong-headed, sense of the world as a whole, of world history, of the contours of American history. Or, for that matter, of the difference between an assertion and an argument. I think these things are central to the educational process.

FR: To fulfill the American Cultures requirement, a course must take a look at three of the five ethnic subgroups: African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos/Chicanos, and European Americans. What's wrong with this approach?

TG: Nothing, in principle, as long as there are more general American and world history requirements. The test is in the specific courses. From what I hear, these are not Mickey Mouse—or feel-good—courses. I find it, actually, sort of silly to say that all Asian American groups have a common experience. Or that the Irish, the Poles, the Jews and the Anglo-Saxons are indistinguishable "Euro-Americans." These are themselves constructed categories.

Todd Gitlin teaches sociology at the University of California at Berkeley.

NEWSCLIPS

faculty workloads is relatively small and hasn't happened at most schools. Although "research" did drive up costs in the 1980s, it wasn't humanities research that was the culprit. Large and costly projects caused many universities to overinvest in scientific research in hopes of getting federal grants or corporate money, as reflected in the research "overhead" scandal.

There are serious problems which need to be addressed. Administrative costs are excessive, and many universities need more efficient management. Teaching is often undervalued at some of the leading research universities. But these attacks on professors rarely suggest effective reforms.

Meacham advocates changing the requirements for the Ph.D. to eliminate the dissertation, a proposal made by Jacques Barzun 25 years ago and repeated most recently by Martin Anderson in *Impostors in the Temple*. But reducing standards won't improve quality or lower costs. It's particularly suspicious to find people complaining about "research" mainly when it reaches conclusions they find ideologically suspect. It's no secret that many conservatives want to limit research in the humanities in order to prevent the "politicization" of the university.

Research and teaching needn't be framed as opposites. On the contrary, good research and good teaching can go together, and usually do. The problem is that teaching is difficult to evaluate, and research is often viewed separately from teaching. Faculty need to begin considering how research and teaching can interact. Instead of merely reading (and criticizing) each other's articles, professors should attend one another's classes and give suggestions for improvement. Instead of only valuing specialized research, faculty should favor well-written ideas which communicate to the public as teachers must communicate to students.

The conservative attacks on universities have manipulated the understandable public resentment against higher costs into a hostility directed at leftists and radicals who are said to be in control of universities. However, the real enemies of quality higher education are not tenured radicals, but administrators with misplaced priorities and the federal and state government officials who, ironically enough, use these criticisms of higher education to justify cutting budgets and further exacerbating these problems.

—John K. Wilson

Democratic Culture — Page 11

NEWSCLIPS

The Crisis in Higher Education

After years of unabashed bashing by the conservatives, the academic left is learning to bash back, to make their own criticisms of higher education, and to analyze their reception in the public culture. A conference in April at the University of Illinois on "Higher Education in Crisis" showed the determination of academic liberals and leftists to prove themselves to the American public.

Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson of the University of Illinois, who organized the conference after attending a TDC meeting in Chicago, began with a strong statement of the conference's aims, proclaiming an "unqualified self-defense in the face of a frontal assault." They refused to apologize for the changes in higher education or claim that it was "business as usual." Instead, they urged the conference to "defend, explain, and critique" what has happened since the 1960s. However, they noted that "we don't believe all is well," pointing to increasing tuition costs and corporate sponsorship as a threat to "the availability of high-quality education to all qualified students." Urging that "universities must work as an egalitarian force," Bérubé and Nelson declared that diversity and democracy were not a danger to the university, but the "finest fulfillment of liberal education."

In his speech, Paul Lauter of Trinity College noted that "tales of political correctness have been inflated like Macy's parade balloons," causing a "smokescreen" of the true crisis in higher education: The underfunding of universities designed to deprive many students of access to a college education. These funding cuts cause "bumping," as many middle class students cannot afford expensive private colleges and go to state universities, forcing poorer students who might have attended those institutions to go instead to community colleges. They also sharply increased the size of student debts, which have more than doubled in the past 15 years as tuition costs rose and federal student aid was drastically cut.

After the introduction of the economic problems in the university, the conference focused on the controversial issue of identity politics. Todd Gitlin of Berkeley criticized the New Left emphasis on identity politics, contrasting it with the 1960s Old Left "ideal of universal humanity." Gitlin (who was criticized for being "nostalgic" in his view of univer-

conference report

Feminism and Classical Studies

Barbara Gold

TO many insiders and outsiders alike, the field of Classical Studies has long seemed hopelessly mired in an unhealthy idealization of the past and completely resistant to even the most necessary and salutary changes. Classics has finally begun to accept the sorts of curricular, pedagogical, theoretical, and scholarly advances that many other disciplines have been more eager to embrace. Yet this long overdue transformation has proceeded slowly, and there are still signs of fear and reluctance.

Two recent events and the responses to them signal the slow dance (one step forward, two steps back) of classics into the 21st century. In November, 1992, a first-of-its-kind symposium was held at the University of Cincinnati on *Feminism and Classics*. The symposium marked the first time that those engaged in research on women in the ancient world, and those interested in feminist approaches to teaching and studying classical antiquity, joined together for a profession-wide discussion about the clash between the evolving feminist principles that many of us espouse, and the practice of classical scholarship as many others define it.

Two highlights of the conference were the inspiring keynote address by the distinguished American historian and feminist scholar Gerda Lerner and the wrenchingly introspective but productive threshing session at the close of the conference about where to invest feminist energy in the future. As might be expected, no consensus emerged about the kinds of research in classics that need to be done nor about new directions that might profitably be taken. But the symposium was characterized by a far freer exchange of ideas and sense of community and identity than exists at our annual classics meetings.

However, the Cincinnati symposium attracted only a few senior faculty members from universities that award the Ph.D. degree in classics, and fewer still who were not already committed to the integration of feminism and classics. Those classicists who had the most to learn from such a gathering, who have done the least to support feminist work in classics, and who have the greatest power to effect transformation in our profession, were conspicuously underrepresented.

An important point made at our closing session was that we, as classicists and feminists, must focus our attention not only on gender but also on race. The suppression and marginalization of issues related to third-world feminism and the near absence of women of color from our midst should have been a glaring reminder to us that we still have much work to do.

The second event, which was clouded in controversy even as it exercised a salutary effect on at least some segments of the classics community, was the panel on "Sexual Harassment and the Classics Profession" presented at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association in New Orleans on December 29, 1992.

Those of the panelists who have been sexually harassed and discriminated against in the past feel that they have been harassed a second time by this long and agonizing effort to educate the APA membership about sexual harassment.

Judith Hallett and I submitted a proposal for the conference to the APA program committee in February 1992. We proposed a format consisting of three presentations followed a discussion period. The first presentation, by Judith Ginsburg of Cornell University, would review the section on sexual harassment in the APA Code of Professional Ethics. The second, by Diana Robin of the University of New Mexico, would summarize anonymously the findings of testimony collected from members of the classics community about instances of sexual harassment which they had personally experienced or witnessed. The third presentation, by myself and Hallett, would interpret the testimony, focusing on strategies for avoiding and combating harassment in our profession.

The program committee had two concerns about the panel causing it to delay its decision about acceptance: The panel's format and "possible legal consequences." Both the prospect of a threat of legal action for defamation by a member of the organization if this panel was allowed

to proceed, and the lack of liability insurance to protect the APA and its officers, caused this panel to be approached in a less friendly, less constructive atmosphere dominated by legal restrictions.

The panel was finally approved, contingent upon the association obtaining liability insurance prior to the December meeting. We had to agree to a number of conditions: Panelists who drew upon and described their own experiences would not identify themselves as participants in these episodes in order to protect the privacy of those involved; questions from the floor in the discussion period would be received only in writing and could not identify any individual or institution; there would be no "audible inferences" from the audience about the identities of any individuals institutions, or incidents discussed by any of the panelists; the entire session would be tape-recorded; a handout detailing the restrictions placed on the panel would be distributed at the door to all attendees; legal counsel should perhaps be available at the panel and should review texts of all presentations in advance; and the panelists should consider not only cases of sexual harassment but also cases in which actions "may be misinterpreted and individuals unjustifiably accused of sexual harassment."

Despite these conditions, in the fall we were informed by the APA program committee that the future of the panel was again in danger. Because a frivolous threat of legal action for defamation against the APA had been received prior to October 1, when the association's liability insurance coverage was scheduled to take effect, our panel constituted a "preexisting condition" according to legal advice given to the APA. Therefore, since the liability insurance would not cover the panel, it was not included in the official program for the annual meeting which was going to press the following week.

Finally, as a result of more legal maneuvering and more concessions on the part of the panelists, it was decided that the panel could proceed under the restrictive conditions. Issues of free speech, first amendment rights, and chilling effects on free inquiry were raised by the panelists and the task force throughout these negotiations. The APA assured the panelists that every effort would be made to publicize the panel to compensate for its omission from the program. A letter was sent out to the membership by third-class mail, but the promised notice about the panel was left out of the supplement to the program, the abstract that had been submitted was omitted from the abstract book, and no flyers were posted until the organizers complained.

Despite the restrictions imposed on the panelists, the presentations managed to document and reflect in depth on the phenomenon of sexual harassment in our profession. But the conditions under which the panelists finally presented the panel were so restrictive that most of the amused and angry questions after the panel were directed at these restrictions and the reasons for them. The inclusion of the APA lawyer on the panel to present "the legal definition of sexual harassment" and to justify the procedures caused particular concern. Fortunately, Ruth Colker of Tulane University Law School, a specialist in sexual harassment litigation, was added to the panel at the last minute. Her presentation began by clarifying the conditions under which a defamation suit could be filed, and it should have laid to rest any fear of legal reprisal against the panel. She pointed out that in a defamation suit, the burden of proof would be on the plaintiff to show that the alleged sexual harassment had not taken place; further, that such a suit would be virtually impossible to file in this case given the lapse of time and the strict anonymity preserved by the panelists.

Those of the panelists who have been sexually harassed and discriminated against in the past feel that they have been harassed a second time by this long and agonizing effort to educate the APA membership about sexual harassment. We are, however, strengthened by our sense that our labors have instilled a greater awareness about sexual harassment in at least some of our colleagues and that we have paved the way for future efforts to combat and avoid sexual harassment. We hope that these forms of intimidation have not overshadowed the importance of viewing sexual harassment as a serious and pervasive problem affecting not just a small number of "oversensitive" people, but many students and junior faculty who are powerless to protect themselves.

Barbara Gold teaches Classics at Hamilton College.

Telling the Truth

TDC is in the process of creating a network of speakers, contacts for the media, and op-ed writers to help spread our members' views. If you are interested in helping us organize or becoming part of this network, please write to Telling the Truth, Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204.

NEWSCLIPS

salism) declared that the "separatist theory" of the left today led to the conclusion that "anatomy, once again, becomes destiny."

Barry Gross of City College of New York, a member of the National Association of Scholars, said that higher education was "going to hell in a handcart" because universities were becoming "political, vocational, and anti-intellectual." Jeffrey Herf, a fellow at the German Historical Institute and Johns Hopkins University, made a similar argument, declaring that conservatives "sell books" while "politically correct academics continued their successes within the academy." As a result, he said, conservatives were "an increasingly marginalized group" and "nothing is more deadly in the humanities or social sciences than to be labeled a conservative." Herf noted that it was easy to show the exaggerations in journalistic accounts of PC, but he added, "the exaggerations contain some truth."

Yet, like Gitlin, the conservatives were unable to come up with any alternative visions to explain what universities, falling back on undefined notions of "standards shared by many historians," "shared norms of evidence," and "commonly-held standards of excellence." Bruce Wilshire of Rutgers University gave examples of "truth" which included "2+2=4," "it's daylight," and "bashing an infant's head in... is evil," as if the debates about the humanities could be reduced to scientific equations and weather reports. Barry Gross criticized those who believe there is "no truth or reality" while admitting, "I actually never caught anyone doing this." Many people at the conference showed that the critique of objectivity by the left is not a demand for relativism or identity politics above all else, but the recognition that, in Bérubé and Nelson's words, "factual events are inseparable from our interpretations of them."

Yet academia still fails to respond publicly and energetically to conservative attacks, still fails to resolve the difficult problems of identity politics, and still lacks a comprehensive strategy for turning the tables on the conservatives. Perhaps the incident which best symbolized the problems of academics in appealing to a broader audience was when a speaker asked if there were any undergraduates in the audience. Everyone looked around, and nobody raised a hand.

Academics will gain the upper hand in the culture wars only by countering the false attacks on universities, being

NEWSCLIPS

open to debate and criticism, developing an alternative vision of what universities ought to be, and communicating in intelligible ways with the general public. Only then can the real crisis in the university—the decline in funding, the excessive burdens placed on poor students, and the trends toward scientific research and vocational training—finally be addressed. This conference was a beginning, but only a beginning, of a project on the left that should have begun long ago and still leaves much more work to be done.

—*John K. Wilson*

Are the Culture Wars Over?

Many recent commentators suggest that we have achieved peace, or perhaps a cease-fire, in the PC battles. Paul Levine asks in the February 8, 1993 issue of *The Nation*, "Will 1992 go down as the year in which the culture wars in America ended?" Alan Ryan, writing in the February 11th *New York Review of Books*, begins his review by declaring, "Peace of a sort may have broken out in the humanities." Christopher Newfield's article, "What Was Political Correctness?" which appears in the Winter 1993 *Critical Inquiry*, notes that "After more than a year of broadcasting emergencies, the national press lost interest, and we might be tempted to breathe a sigh of relief and get back to work."

Although it is encouraging to find more reasonable voices in these cultural disputes, it would be unfortunate to declare the end of a crisis and return quietly to our classrooms. The culture wars have provided us with a unique opportunity to re-examine the ideals of colleges and universities, and to answer the questions of what should be taught and how we ought to teach.

The misrepresentations about the changes currently going on in academia have often distracted us from addressing these issues. Perhaps a better debate can now be engaged about the aims and institutions of higher education.

Democratic Culture hopes to be a forum for discussion of these important ideas. We accept submissions for publication at any time, and encourage responses to articles printed in the newsletter. Send submissions to: *Democratic Culture*, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204.

—*John K. Wilson*

Wisconsin Teachers for a Democratic Culture

Statement of Principles

The Wisconsin chapter of Teachers for a Democratic Culture began organizing at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in the summer of 1992. Among its organizers are professor emeritus of history Gerda Lerner, theatre professor Robert Skloot, and English and Women's Studies professor Dale Bauer. The Wisconsin TDC met in April 1993, with a national representative of TDC. The group is interested in working on access and financing of higher education, multiculturalism, and lobbying of public agencies.

Wisconsin Teachers for a Democratic Culture has a few basic aims:

- To sponsor and explain initiatives that will improve the quality of higher education, with particular attention to measures that address the facts of cultural and economic diversity, as described in the University of Wisconsin's Mission statement.
- To affirm our enduring commitment to educational excellence and quality.
- To affirm our commitment to democratic education in a multicultural nation. Our varying understandings of what such a commitment means in terms of theory, the content of our studies and the methods of our teaching are being developed in a process characterised as much by dialogue and disagreement as by consensus. This process must remain open, free of political interference and free of simplistic distortions.
- To provide fair and accurate representation of educational developments at our nation's colleges and universities, especially in response to misleading charges about "political correctness."
- To affirm and defend efforts at improving race relations and equal access to education at all levels for members of minority groups and for women; to support greater racial and gender diversity in faculty and student bodies, which will better equip all students to function in a multiracial world; to extend awareness of the history, achievements and contributions to the nation's culture and thought of racial, ethnic, religious and other minorities.
- To support recent curriculum reforms which have attempted to be sensitive to the needs, aspirations and expressions of a diverse student body and which have opened classrooms to a greater range of ideas and viewpoints than has the traditional curriculum.
- To explain to the public the importance of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches to study and learning, and to affirm the rights and contributions to general knowledge of such programs or units as Women's Studies, Afro-American Studies, Asian-American Studies, Chicano Studies, American Indian Studies, Jewish Studies, International Studies and various other area studies programs.
- To emphasize that scholarship means the production of new knowlege, which often requires challenging and revising previous definitions of what is true and real.
- To encourage democratic processes of debate and reform in dealing with such controversial matters as curriculum changes, admissions and hiring policies, affirmative action, free speech, and tenure and promotion criteria.
- To promote the involvement of teachers, scholars and students in public policy debates, so that the knowledge produced in colleges and universities finds its way more immediately and effectively into the public arena.
- To monitor the work done by governmental agencies that provide grant monies to teachers and scholars, and to make recommendations when persons are to be nominated to governmental advisory councils such as those at the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment of the Arts in order to assure that such nominations represent a broad spectrum of academic views.

Teachers for a Democratic Culture urges its members to organize state or regional chapters of TDC. State chapters of TDC meet together to discuss issues, plan conferences, develop strategies for countering misinformation in the media, and deal with local issues of interest to its members. If you are interested in forming or joining a chapter, contact TDC for information and assistance.

Join TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

(The following is excerpted from the original statement of purpose of Teachers for a Democratic Culture.)

Colleges and universities in the United States have lately begun to serve the majority of Americans better than ever before. Whereas a few short years ago, institutions of higher education were exclusive citadels often closed to women, minorities and the disadvantaged, today efforts are being made to give a far richer diversity of Americans access to a college education. Reforms in the content of the curriculum have also begun to make our classrooms more representative of our nation's diverse peoples and beliefs and to provide a more truthful account of our history and cultural heritage. Much remains to be done, but we can be proud of the progress of democratization in higher education.

A vociferous band of critics has arisen, however, who decry these changes and seek to reverse them. These critics have painted an alarming picture of the state of contemporary education as a catastrophic collapse. This picture rests on a number of false claims: that the classics of Western civilization are being eliminated from the curriculum in order to make race, gender or political affiliation the sole measure of a text's or subject's worthiness to be taught; that teachers across the land are being silenced and politically intimidated; that the very concepts of reason, truth and artistic standards are being subverted in favor of a crude ideological agenda.

It is our view that recent curricular reforms influenced by multiculturalism and feminism have greatly enriched education rather than corrupted it. It is our view as well that the controversies that have been provoked over admissions and hiring practices, the social functions of teaching and scholarship, and the status of such concepts as objectivity and ideology are signs of educational health, not decline.

Contrary to media reports, it is the National Association of Scholars, their corporate foundation supporters and like-minded writers in the press who are endangering education with a campaign of harassment and misrepresentation. Largely ignorant of the academic work they attack (often not even claiming to have read it), these critics make no distinction between extremists among their opposition and those who are raising legitimate questions about the relations of culture and society. And though these critics loudly invoke the values of rational debate and open discussion, they present the current debate over education not as a legitimate conflict in which reasonable disagreement is possible but as a simple choice between civilization and barbarism.

Yet because the mainstream media have reported misinformed opinions as if they were established facts, the picture the public has received of recent academic developments has come almost entirely from the most strident detractors of these developments....

It is time for those who believe in the values of democratic education and reasoned dialogue to join together in an organization that can fight such powerful forms of intolerance and answer mischievous misrepresentations. We support the right of scholars and teachers to raise questions about the relations of culture, scholarship and education to politics—not in order to shut down debate on such issues but to open it. It is such a debate that is prevented by discussion-stopping slogans like "political correctness."

What does the notion of a "democratic culture" mean and how does it relate to education? In our view, a democratic culture is one in which criteria of value in art are not permanently fixed by tradition and authority but are subject to constant revision. It is a culture in which terms such as "canon," "literature," "tradition," "artistic value," "common culture" and even "truth" are seen as disputed rather than given. This means not that standards for judging art and scholarship must be discarded but that such standards should evolve out of democratic processes in which they can be thoughtfully challenged.

We understand the problems in any organization claiming to speak for a very diverse, heterogeneous group of teachers who may sharply disagree on many issues, including that of the politics of culture. What we envision is a coalition of very different individuals and groups, bound together by the belief that recent attacks on new forms of scholarship and teaching must be answered in a spirit of principled discussion. We think the very formation of such a group will be an important step in gaining influence over the public representations of us and our work.

It will also be a way to take responsibility for the task of clarifying our ideas and practices to the wider public—something, it must be admitted, that we have not done as well as we should. We need an organization that can not only refute malicious distortions but also educate the interested public about matters that still to often remain shrouded in mystery—new literary theories and movements such as deconstructionism, feminism, multiculturalism and the new historicism, and their actual effects on classroom practice.

We therefore propose the formation of Teachers for a Democratic Culture.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

JOIN TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE WITH THIS FORM

The continuing growth and success of TDC depends your involvement and your contributions. We ask all current TDC members *who did not renew their membership after our first issue* to return this form to cover calender year 1993. We also encourage non-members who have received this newsletter to join us. Please mail this membership form to: Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston IL 60204.

__Yes, I want to become a member of TDC __Yes, I want to renew my membership in TDC

Enclosed is my 1993 contribution of: ___$50 ___$25 ___$5 (students)

Name_____

Department_____School or Affiliation_____

City_____State_____Zip_____Home Address (if preferred)_____

Phone Numbers: Business_____FAX_____Home_____E-mail_____

Democratic Culture — Page 15

Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405
Evanston, IL
60204

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 6057

democratic Culture

newsletter of Teachers for a Democratic Culture

INSIDE

— *John K. Wilson* on the case of Johnnetta Cole, **Page 1**.

— *Judith Stacey* on intellectual life after Cheney, **page 3**.

— *Tim Brennan* defends the Old Left against left and right critics, **page 4**.

— *Donald Lazere* answers the conservative distortions, **page 6**.

— *Barbara Gold* confronts sexism in Classical Studies, **page 12**.

Plus: News on Sheldon Hackney, the National Association of Scholars, the end of the culture wars, and more.

HE

TDC Announces New Regulations for Literary Critics!—page 2

Newsletter of
Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405 • Evanston, IL 60204

(312) 743-3662 • FAX: (312) 743-4548
e-mail: jkw3@amber.uchicago.edu

democratic Culture

Volume 2
Number 2
Fall 1993

Some Questions About Critical Pedagogy

Gregory Jay and Gerald Graff

FOR THE LAST few years, we have joined many of our colleagues in defending the academy against charges of "political correctness." We still believe that the anti-PC assault was and is orchestrated by politically-motivated operatives outside higher education who want to turn back the clock to the days of ivy-covered, white male prep schools catering to the American power elite. This threat seemed serious enough to us to warrant minimizing the grain of truth in the PC charges, which were always exaggerations rather than pure fabrications.

At some point, however, those of us who think of ourselves as advocates of reform and progressive agendas in higher education are going to have to return to the original meaning of "political correctness"—as a name for the extravagances and follies that our own side commits. The hijacking of the term "political correctness" by the Right should not obscure the fact that it began on the Left, with the Left's own sense that recurrent self-criticism of our excesses ought to be a regular feature of our reflections. But once everyone on the Left, or even near the Middle, was declared PC, we were put on the defensive. The traditional task of criticizing our flaws now appeared either superfluous—since the Right was doing it so vociferously—or a betrayal.

Ironically, the dogmatism of the Right made it less, not more, possible to isolate and criticize dogmatism on the Left, for the entire Left and much of the Middle had been heaped together under the PC rubric. But the time has come when some serious efforts at Left self-criticism have to be ventured, even if they give some aid and comfort to the enemy. The risk is necessary, for it is only such self-criticism that can save the movement for the democratic transformation of the academy from being undermined by its own advocates. In the long run, this movement will benefit from such self-criticism, which will sharpen our thinking and enable us to answer our critics more persuasively.

Let us leave no doubt about our own allegiance. We regard the new studies in gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality as the most revitalizing developments to have taken place in education in our lifetime. We believe these studies, along with the affirmative action initiatives that have accompanied them, have opened up questions about politics, power, and representation that educational institutions had too long suppressed. We also believe, however, that when these questions are translated into pedagogical practices and programs it is crucial that they be kept open, not treated as if they had been settled. Terms like "cultural diversity" and student "empowerment" should denote a set of problems to be explored and debated, not a new truth which teachers and students must uncritically accept.

It remains important to maintain, then, that criticism can be supportive, and indeed that without criticism no social movement can get very far in improving its program and chances. We do not see enough of such self-criticism in the various movements toward critical and oppositional pedagogy that have become so prominent on the current scene.

We would like to point out a troublesome double bind that has plagued these movements since the 1960s. What worries us is the way that efforts by teachers to empower students often end up reinforcing the inequalities of the classroom. This is clearest when teachers directly promote progressive doctrines in their courses, merely inverting the traditional practice of *handing* knowledge *down* to passive students who dutifully copy it into their notebooks.

This problem appears in the work of such radical educational theorists as Paulo Freire. In his influential book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire attacks the Leninist model of education in which revolutionary leaders impose their teleological blueprint on students, merely inverting

continued on page 15

This essay, excerpted from a forthcoming article, represents our personal view. We invite readers to submit responses and challenges. —*GJ/GG*

TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Co-Coordinators:
Gerald Graff
Gregory Jay

Provisional Steering Committee:
Steve Fuller
Jane Gallop
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Barbara Gold
Dominick LaCapra
Amy Lang
Donald Lazere
Ellen Messer-Davidow
Patricia Ramsey
David Shumway
James Slevin
Judith Stacey
Dan Tompkins
Mark Tushnet
Richard Yarborough

Newsletter Editor:
John K. Wilson

Newsletter Layout:
Reid Huntsinger

INSIDE

— A *Special Report* on the Hackney Nomination, **pages 11–13**

— *Ward Parks* recounts his conservative conversion and debates affirmative action with *William Demastes*, **page 4**

— *Michael Schwalbe* and *Terrence Ripmaster* examine today's students, **page 8**

— *Michael Bérubé* scrutinizes politicization and peer review, **page 17**

—*Raymond June* looks at multiculturalism, **page 20**

Plus: letters, a report on TDC at the University of Illinois, and Newsclips about Borking the Clinton nominees, right-wing PC, the MLA survey & more.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP—BACK PAGE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Regulations for Literary Criticism in the 1990s

Michael Bérubé and Gerald Graff

AS EVERYONE KNOWS, we literature professors have become sitting ducks for media attacks. Where once we were widely revered as tweedy dithering schoolteachers in bow ties or buns, carefully parsing split infinitives and memorizing long passages from Tennyson, we are now routinely ridiculed for our barbarous jargon, anti-Americanism, outlandish paper titles, and (of course) "political correctness."

We have done our best to answer these attacks, but to little avail. Clearly, the time has come for drastic measures. We therefore announce the following regulations for critics and professors of literature, effective for all future courses, conferences, and appearances before the general public.

Regulation I. *No unfamiliar language.*

(A) We literary critics lost network coverage of our annual convention in 1977, when Shoshana Felman uttered the word "phallogocentrism" live on prime time television. One might think that we would have learned our lesson from that episode, but since then the proliferation of perplexing and obfuscatory language has, if anything, accelerated at each year's gathering. We simply cannot countenance any more of such language if we are to keep our conventions open to the general public. We therefore enjoin literary critics from using unfamiliar words.

It will no doubt be objected that "unfamiliar words" is a relative term, since different words are familiar to different audiences. Frankly, we think it's getting awfully late in the day for this kind of poppycock. We all know what "unfamiliar words" are, and we're certainly not going to repeat them here. Suffice it to say that we can no longer visit upon innocent reporters and bystanders such monstrous words as "intertextual," "iterable," "counterhegemonic," or "subaltern." Likewise, any professor trying to pawn off nonsense words like "catechresis" or "anaphora" will deserve whatever public humiliation he or she receives.

(B) Even worse are unfamiliar words that *sound like* familiar words. Nothing is more infuriating than to hear a word whose meaning you think you know, only to find out that the word has *another meaning* known to none but a small circle of smug, smirking theorymongers. For our 1993-94 conventions and in future years, we will publish a list of interdicted "familiar" words whose use by literary critics only serves further to damage our reputation. This year, that list will include "sign," "code," "discourse," "text," "subject," "gaze," "articulation," and "recuperate." However, we will not include "hymen" or "phallus" for fear of being tainted by their very utterance.

Regulation II. *No Politics.*

Nothing is more dreary than a literary critic who projects his or her (usually *her*) petty political concerns onto some innocent, defenseless literary work. Literature should not be the occasion for fashionable modern hand-wringing or "politically correct" interpretations that have nothing to do with what the author intended.

If we are to abstain from the use of unfamiliar language (see Regulation I), we should *at the very least* do our great writers the courtesy of abstaining from political ideas that would not have occurred to them. We demand, therefore, that literary critics refrain from newfangled political concepts that the great writers would not understand, such as "gender" and "power." The rule of thumb here is simple: whether you are discussing Shakespeare, Cervantes, or Samuel Johnson, do not speak or write in language that they did not use.

In fact, the less "interpretation" you indulge in, and the more you simply read from your author's works themselves, the safer you'll be—and the safer *we'll* be. As Lynne Cheney tried to remind us time and again, the problem is that we stubbornly insist on interpreting texts for ourselves, thereby distorting and dishonoring the very cultural heritage we are supposed to be preserving. Of course, regrettably, some "interpretation" of literary texts is inevitable, but this is hardly an excuse for throwing all decency to the winds.

Regulation III. *Avoid popular culture.*

Many of us imagine that it spices up our presentations to allude to Madonna or *The Simpsons*, presumably in order to make some specious point about how popular culture can be as intellectually engaging as the works of great writers. In recent years, some of us have even applied the tools of critical analysis to such popular drivel, as if it actually possessed some meaning. No one is fooled by this. If there is one thing worse than trashing a great book for its sexism and racism, it is talking about it in the same sentence as "movies" and "video." Popular culture cannot be intellectually rewarding. If it were, it would not be popular. By the same token, popular culture is out of our provenance as teachers of literature. Surely if God had intended us to be popular, our conventions would pre-empt the NFL playoffs, Adrienne Rich would have her own talk show, and Stanley Fish would be *The Last Action Hero*.

Regulation IV. *No controversial ideas.*

If you want to give a public address involving controversial ideas, join the Controversial Ideas Association and deliver a paper at *their* annual convention. The problem with controversial ideas, as we all know, is that people often disagree with them. Remember, literature is literature precisely because it transcends any controversial idea. And literary criticism is what we do *instead* of thinking about controversial ideas.

Regulation V. *No sex.*

No topic has invited so much public derision and horror as this. When it comes to sex, it doesn't matter whether we're being covered by the *New York Times Magazine*, the *New Criterion*, or the *Manchester Union Leader*: we will be pilloried. And rightly so.

If you want to talk in public about sex or sexuality, get on Donahue, Oprah, or Geraldo. Sex and sexuality are, by definition, things that many people feel uncomfortable about (in fact, we feel uncomfortable

writing this very regulation!), and literary criticism is no place for the discussion of such matters. After all, literary criticism is what we do *instead* of having sex. Worse still, encouraging other people to think about sex and sexuality may lead them to engage in sex themselves.

As far as gay and lesbian literature professors are concerned, we welcome them so long as they do not announce themselves *as* gay or lesbian, something that is obviously irrelevant to literature. Though they are often talented teachers and scholars, openly gay and lesbian scholars have clearly had a very serious effect on the morale of the press corps. So take a cue from your local library or local armed forces recruiting office, and sssssshhh.

Regulation VI. *No funny or "provocative" titles for papers.*

Remember that most reporters will never know anything more about the paper you deliver at a convention than the title printed in the program. That doesn't mean (as some of you apparently believe) you should take this opportunity to draw attention to yourselves by coming up with titles like "Who Has the Phallus?" "I Thought *You* Had the Phallus," or "Give Me Back That Phallus." On the contrary: if your paper offers a staid, stolid critique of Northrop Frye's theory of romance, but it's entitled "Romancing the Stone: The Sodomy of Elegy in Frye's *Anatomy*" or "Fear of Fryeing: A Lurid Tale of Romance" (see also Regulation V), you not only bring disrepute on your own paper and panel; you expose us all to disgrace and embarrassment. And all just so you can amuse yourself and your smug, theorymongering friends. Which brings us to the last of these regulations.

Regulation VII. *No irony.*

In 1990, Andrew Ross quipped that he liked teaching at Princeton because it gave him a chance to radicalize the children of the ruling class. Lynne Cheney took him entirely at his word, fingering him in "Telling the Truth" as a corrupter of the nation's youth. In 1992 Molly Hite delivered a paper for a panel entitled "The Humor of the MLA," and titled it "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Three-Button Jacket," alluding to the once scandalous title of Eve Sedgwick's 1989 paper. The *U.S. News & World Report* cited her title as further evidence of the moral turpitude of the MLA.

It was irony, of course, that got us in trouble to begin with, when radicals were foolish enough to satirize their own kind for "political correctness." This unfortunate lapse paved the way for Carol Iannone to claim that "political correctness" was "long a *designation of approval* by the hard left," a designation of approval for so "long" that no record exists of anyone actually using it that way.

The lesson is clear. Employing irony, speaking tongue in cheek, talking wryly or self-mockingly—these smartass intellectual practices give our whole profession a bad name. If there's one thing calculated to alienate an otherwise friendly and helpful press, it's irony. As Dan Quayle once put it, irony is an ill wind that bites the hand that feeds our fashionable cynicism.

We cannot mince words about irony. Knock it off, and knock it off now. In the first place, nobody understands your little ironies but you and your theorymongering friends. In the second place, even if someone *does* understand your ironies, they still won't translate into newsprint and you'll wind up looking foolish anyway. In the third place, great literature demands of us a high seriousness of purpose—not disrespectful laughter and clowning around. So just wipe that smirk off your face.

What's left for me to talk about?

With so much prohibited, you are probably thinking, "What is left for me to teach and write about?" The answer, of course, is plain: Literature and Life. Literature and life, the great enduring issues, all remain—as long as they don't involve sex, politics, controversy, popular culture, irony, or unfamiliar words. For those who may still be stuck for a topic, however, we particularly recommend the following:

Feminism—Threat or Menace?
Why I Love Literature
Beowulf or Grendel? You Make the Call
Literature and God
Why Poets Are Just Regular Folks
Faulkner and Lawrence: Whose Nature Imagery is More Robust?
How Literature Can Make the World a Nicer Place
Poems to Treasure Always
Literature—Love It or Leave It!

So let's get out there, fellow literature professors, and let's show those detractors of ours that just because we teach literature, that doesn't mean we have to be perverts or terrorists. Oh, and one final thing—defend free speech at all times!

HELP!!!

$$$!!!

Teachers for a Democratic Culture **doesn't receive hundreds of thousands of dollars from conservative foundations to support our activities. We depend solely upon the contributions of our members to continue our work. TDC badly needs renewals from current members. We also urge non-members who have received this newsletter to join us.**

Send in your annual membership ($25 faculty, $5 students) to Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204.

TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

NEWSCLIPS

TDC at the University of Illinois

June Juffer

On October 1 and 2, TSDC members at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign presented "Conflicts in Context: A Working Conference on Problems Confronting U.S. Universities," a conference that marked the first step toward making the group an active chapter on this campus. Before the conference, organizing members decided that the name "Teachers and Students for a Democratic Culture" would better reflect the group's composition and goals.

In several critical ways, the conference succeeded in achieving what the organizers, mainly English graduate students, hoped would happen. First, about 200 people from different disciplines and locations (administrators, faculty, graduate and undergraduate students) were involved in some part of the two-day conference. Second, the five panels provoked interesting, conflictual, and sometimes productive discussion and debate about the issues we thought might serve as future ground for action. For example, the panel dealing with university governance and retrenchment, focusing on a recent report recommending funding changes in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, brought together an LAS associate dean, two faculty members who participated in writing the report, and two graduate students whose departments were negatively affected by the report (one from comparative literature, which under the report would be eliminated). The discussion that followed the panel presentations in part realized what we hoped would happen: people, both on the panel and in the audience, airing sharp disagreements about the report.

In fact, at all of the five panels there was a sense that we had indeed brought together dissenting voices, that we were perhaps laying the foundation for a democratic organization that could on some issues represent a heterogenous and sometimes dissenting population. At the panel on the politics of representation, focusing on Chief Illiniwek, anti-Chief students and community activists hotly debated with College Republicans about the university's mascot, and anti-Chief activists debated about strategy, a radical feminist was filing a professional harassment and sexual discrimination grievance against me and Kevin Cope, my department ally in this struggle. An exotic feature of this assistant professor's grievance was that it contained not a single behavioral allegation, nor did it cite a single instance where either Cope or I had referred to her personally, although she did cite as evidence against us a satirical article that we did not write. Nonetheless, she regarded herself as the victim of a "pattern" of discrimination because of our statements in opposition to political correctness. Ironically enough, during that period Cope and I were being ostracized and denounced by the department's ruling political bloc to which our accuser belonged; but even though we plainly represented a beleaguered minority of two, we were the ones, in her eyes, guilty of harassment for having expressed heterodox opinions.

The hearing that followed could have been a chapter out of Kafka. We were not permitted to confront our accuser; we were not told the names of the other witnesses the committee had interviewed; we were not asked for complete copies of the articles or talks or memoranda that were the basis of the charges against us; we were not allowed to tape the session itself. My portion of the hearing, which went on for two hours, focused on my views and opinions (often previously unexpressed) of various intellectual matters; only a small portion of the hearing dealt with the actual charges against me. One inquisitor, for example, asked me to give my definition of feminism. Evidently, my understanding of feminism was relevant to my guilt or innocence on a harassment charge.

In the end, happily, we were acquitted. A lawyer had accompanied us to the hearing, and we had made clear our intention to sue if we were not fully exonerated. It would seem that the services of a lawyer are indispensable for scholars who wish to criticize political correctness on some of our campuses today. What used to be called "dissent" has been reinterpreted as harassment and hate speech by yesteryear's apostles of the Free Speech Movement.

This experience has profoundly alienated me from the academic left and accounts for my current work at the Heritage Foundation. I have found much more tolerance and respect for opposing viewpoints at this privately-funded think tank than I have ever found at mainstream universities that feed at the public trough. It is only too clear to me why my public stands for freedom of con-

On the Origins of My Conservatism

Ward Parks

OVER THE PAST two or three years I have often read about a conservative conspiracy whose aim is to thwart and undermine the work of academic progressives; and in such accounts, the name of the Heritage Foundation figures prominently. In point of fact, Heritage's primary orientation is non-academic. Its main academic commitments revolve around the Bradley Resident Scholars, and of the five Bradleys this year, I am the one whose major focus is on political correctness. If there is a conservative conspiracy, then, I would have to be close to the heart of it; and readers of the TDC Newsletter might be interested in knowing how I came to be where I am.

Until very recently, I was almost entirely non-political, or even anti-political; when I voted at all, it was as a liberal. (In 1988, I voted for Dukakis.) During the later 1980s, however, I grew increasingly concerned over the aggressive politicizing of the English department at Louisiana State University, where I have my regular academic position as a medievalist. I was bothered by the tacit yet unmistakable recourse to political criteria in hiring and by the barely concealed professorial scorn for the political benightedness of the Louisiana citizenry and LSU student body, much of which is conservative and Christian. Non-progressive students, I felt, have as much right to their views as professors do, and professors ought to be leaders in respecting and upholding these rights.

Finally, to everyone's surprise, I spoke up, first at a Philology Club meeting, and subsequently in a pair of articles in the student newspaper. In the question-and-answer period after the meeting I was harshly condemned and several times compared to David Duke; and accusations of racism, sexism, and reactionary conservatism have been a regular feature of my university life ever since. After the publication of my articles, there was an abortive attempt by a faction in the tenured professoriate to have me formally censured. At the same time, a group of students (none of whom I knew) were sending a petition to the chancellor complaining of the atmosphere of leftist intimidation that prevailed in English department classes. In other words, a group of my colleagues was prepared to punish me for decrying a spirit of political coerciveness, at the very moment that a group of students was protesting that coerciveness.

Over the next two years I continued to speak and publish on this problem. In 1992, at the same time the issue erupted in the local media and I was featured in a front-page Baton Rouge *Advocate*

science have drawn such ire from my LSU colleagues, and in closing I would like to speak my mind rather bluntly on this point, thus providing a specimen of the kind of speech which my critics were trying to suppress.

The hypocrisy of many on the academic left today is shrieking to the high heavens. Celebrating "democracy," these leftists have transformed the humanities into a publicly-funded one-party state and mounted a witchhunt against their enemies. Inveighing against "discrimination," these leftists have transformed hiring into a race and gender spoils system in which young white males are being scapegoated for evils which they did not commit and "sensitivity trained" into silence about the injustice done to them. Preaching respect for "diversity," these leftists have defended the state sponsorship of "Piss Christ," while promulgating vaguely-worded speech and harassment codes to punish students who, in the view of zealous administrators, offend women and minorities.

There are many decent people on the left who condone this shabby spectacle, or simply look the other way, while others are afraid to speak out. I was one of those who has spoken out. The treatment meted out to me was the consequence of having spoken truths that the academic left cannot bear to hear.

Ward Parks teaches English at Louisiana State and was a fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

Response

William W. Demastes

I DO NOT CLAIM to represent the whole of LSU's English Department faculty in writing this response, but I think my recent experiences in the profession give me a unique perspective from which to respond to Professor Parks. Before I record my experience of some of the same circumstances that Professor Parks addresses, I should say that like many faculty members in our department I am normally unengaged in the debate about political correctness. Contrary to published appearances, the debate is not central to most of this faculty's professional life: for many of us, the charges and counter-charges have played only a small part in our classrooms, meeting rooms, and studies.

I am a white male who was hired by LSU in 1989. In 1991, I was promoted to associate professor, and in 1992 I was elected the department's Director of Graduate Studies. In 1989, I was one of two finalists for my position; it was first offered to a female candidate who chose to accept a position elsewhere. On the job market, I experienced numerous such rankings behind qualified female candidates before the LSU job became mine.

My professional career was affected by an affirmative action process that placed me at a disadvantage on the job market. I admit to suffering through some unpleasant days reflecting upon the apparent inequity, but I also recognized that this inequity was a corrective to past practices which routinely placed women and minorities at a similar disadvantage. And though I was not responsible for these past practices, I was willing to pay in part for the "sins of our fathers."

I was also determined to succeed despite the uneven playing field and because I truly believed I was good enough to succeed. And I was pretty certain that, if affirmative action were not in place, the playing field would have been tilted in my favor. So I fully accepted that legislative intervention was necessary in order to institute equality in the long term. Having survived that experience, I understand some of the feelings behind Ward Parks' complaint, but I must admit I don't accept the conclusion he makes based on those feelings. Parks' insistence that we level the playing field now—before equality is established—would result in reinstating old practices that would again privilege white males.

When affirmative action works as it should—that is, when it is responsive to qualifications *as well as* to race and gender issues—it is a just instrument. Of course, were it instituted otherwise, it would create incredibly unjust results. Since I've been at LSU there has been strong interest in recruiting well-qualified women and minorities. But in almost every hiring attempt, the department has located both well-qualified women and minorities *and* well-qualified white males. The result has been that from academic year 1989–90 to the present, the LSU English Department has hired five white males, four white women, and two African-American males. These numbers do not support the claims of injustice Parks makes.

At other levels, I think Parks should also look at the numbers and procedures. It appears to me that at LSU promotion and tenure are done on an individual basis and without bias. The processes appear to be neither anti-male nor anti-conservative and a fair distribution of tenure and promotions has occurred during my stay here.

Parks' charges of discrimination based on teachers' political leanings are harder to dispute, primarily because there are no real numbers to look at as there are in matters of hiring and promotion. So he

NEWSCLIPS

gies of education versus confrontation. At the panel on the student discipline system, students who had witnessed the system's injustices against Latino and African-American student protesters were able to question the author of a recent senate committee report evaluating the system.

However, we also discovered that arriving at even fragile points of consensus out of such conflict is very difficult. We had left time after each panel and discussion for a strategy session, at which we had hoped the conference participants would suggest more specific approaches that TSDC might take. But it quickly became evident that the audience wanted to continue with open discussion and either was not ready for or did not want to pursue more specific agendas.

Furthermore, we realized that certain kinds of conflictual debate may obfuscate attempts to present issues in their contexts and complexities. For example, while several speakers on the representational politics panel attempted to shift the focus from "The Chief" to broader questions of representation, both the material and cultural implications, the audience kept returning to the narrower question of the mascot, often attacking each other personally.

We also realized that the identity of a TSDC chapter on this campus could be difficult to define. Many participants only attended the panel that addressed their particular interest, indicating that the desire to create a loose coalition of like-minded people might falter in the face of limited time and devotion to these interests. In addition, some of the issues represented in the panels are already being addressed by active campus groups. Some people expressed frustration about the lack of close affiliation with the national organization; while we introduced the conference with the idea that the specific identity would be forged at a local level, some people wanted more direction from the beginning.

Finally, we realized that if TSDC is to take off on this campus, most of the work will likely be done by graduate students. Despite quite extensive efforts to convince undergraduate students to attend the conference, their participation, other than in the Chief panel, was minimal. Only a handful returned for the final strategy session, when the group discussed structure and agendas. And no professors re-

Democratic Culture—Page 5

tumed for the final session; in fact, professors who spoke on panels rarely attended other panels.

At the closing strategy session, however, there was spirited discussion about what would constitute a democratic, fluid, and effective organization that could fill a need at this university as well as agreement that the conference's educative forum was one thing TSDC could continue to do. We set a date, two weeks hence, for a meeting at which to arrive at a more concrete understanding of structure and to divide into issue groups that would report to the larger body.

June Juffer is a graduate student in English at the University of Illinois.

The War Against Theory and the TDC

Gerald Graff and Gregory Jay

In an *American Book Review* article that appeared in 1992 (February/March) entitled "The War Against Theory," Curtis White accused TDC of "disclaiming radicalism," thus leaving "real left radicals with nowhere to stand." In response (*ABR* June/July 1992), we wrote as follows:

> What could Curtis White have had in mind when he referred to Teachers for a Democratic Culture as "disclaiming radicalism"? White could never have made that untrue claim had he bothered to find out who has joined this new organization by asking for a copy of our membership roster, now going on a thousand strong.
>
> It is true that in the TDC statement of principles, we say that critics on the right make "no distinction between extremists among their opposition and those who are raising legitimate questions about the relations of culture and society." In the context of the rest of the statement, it should be obvious that this is not a "disavowal" of radicalism but a criticism of the caricatures that reduce all positions on the left to the crude slogan that "Western culture's gotta go."
>
> It is also true that the TDC statement aims to appeal to people who do not consider themselves radicals, necessarily, but who are offended by the obnoxious misrepresentations may have located a real problem. If he has done so, then the problem needs to be confronted. But, as Director of Graduate Studies, I am the one to hear charges of classroom discrimination at the graduate level. I have heard numerous complaints about grades, grading procedures, and even personality conflicts, but I have yet to hear one charge of political harassment. That, of course, doesn't mean that harassment doesn't exist, but I wonder about the extent of such harassment and doubt Parks' claim that such actions are widespread or systemic. In a department with over 50 graduate faculty members, student-teacher conflicts are inevitable, but I simply do not see the pattern of abuse that Parks alleges. In my position, I do not directly deal with undergraduate problems, but I am engaged with many of the same faculty members who also teach our undergraduate courses, and it seems reasonable that if a teacher is biased he/she will be so at all levels of student-teacher contact. (Of course, I am willing to examine material that demonstrates otherwise.)

Professor Parks reports having experienced an almost tangible hostility toward him by members of LSU's faculty, especially by the women, since he gave his first talk on "Anti-Male Discrimination in the Profession" in 1990. His experience is unfortunate, but I'm surprised that he believes himself innocent of inviting such hostility. After all, as a tenured professor he directly assaulted women and minority colleagues (most of whom were untenured) with charges that they were hired merely to fill quotas, that they are at best nominally qualified to be his colleagues and at worst professional fakes, wholly incapable of scholarly enterprise. Without producing any evidence of abuse, he has published attacks on his colleagues in the student newspaper, warning students, "if you are a political conservative, if you hold religious beliefs of a traditional coloring, or if you do not subscribe to all tenets of radical feminism, you would do well to exercise caution before enrolling in a course in the English department." I am surprised at Professor Parks' surprise that these colleagues rise to their own defense as they have at times done. If at all possible, I'd like to see something positive come out of all this struggle.

Which leads me to a final point, one that I think has been lost in this debate and about which I believe faculty members all along the political spectrum can agree. Professors are not hired to indoctrinate, regardless of whether the perspective be left or right; they are hired to develop their students' skills of inquiry and evaluation. Students do occasionally see the content of a class as something to be uncritically digested, but it is the professor's duty to make clear that course content is presented as a subject for critical scrutiny, the result of which can be an informed acceptance or rejection of that material. If this option is not offered, we have a problem, but it is primarily a pedagogical problem, not a political one. Ultimately, I hope we will give up on charges and counter-charges and begin, disinterestedly, to evaluate pedagogy. Our energy would be better spent in that effort, and it would lead to better and more openly diverse departments that would better serve their student populations.

William W. Demastes teaches English at Louisiana State University.

Reply

Ward Parks

I FIND PROFESSOR DEMASTES' "Response" to be a reasonable one, and this is an important fact. For if we could discuss the issues that divide us *honestly*, many of the current tensions could be diffused. I have this criticism, however: If the new academic orthodoxy is really as moderate as the tone of Demastes' article implies, why are there so many accounts of political abuse? Did these episodes occur without a context?

In representing me as upset over the hostility of my colleagues, Professor Demastes misses the point of my article. Certainly I criticized my department (rarely individuals, but usually the department as a whole) for having created a state of affairs that I regard as immoral; and a number of my colleagues did not hesitate to criticize me in return. Well and good; but what I object to is the attempted recourse to punitive administrative measures. Over the past decade many academic leftists have castigated conservatives, whites, men, Christian fundamentalists, and others in the sharpest terms; yet when similar speech is directed at groups which leftists favor, it is liable to be construed as punishable "harassment" and "hate speech."

If Professor Demastes would reread my articles for the LSU student newspaper, perhaps he would see that this hypocrisy was one of my two or three central themes. I believe it was my repeated exposure of this hypocrisy that provoked that ire which led certain colleagues to resort to administrative expedients in their attempt to silence me. Nor is my experience unique; if it were, I would never have embarked on this campaign. It is representa-

tive of the experience of many academics who have forcibly dissented from current left-wing pieties. If the high priests of the new academic establishment persist in their attempts to pretend that nothing is amiss and that tales of repression are fabrications, in the end they will be regarded as liars.

If Professor Demastes is willing for his own part to pay for the "sins of his fathers," I offer no objection; yet other people should be entitled to make what decision for themselves. The problem with the "sins of the fathers" theory of justice is that it rationalizes the replication of those sins on a new generation. Professor Demastes and I are not the ones on whom the blow falls; the true victims are the white males passing through the system now. I am not and have never argued that justice and equity will be "restored" simply through the abolition of affirmative action. My point is far more rudimentary: We need to be able to talk about what is going on honestly. Whether or not it can ultimately be justified in ethical terms, preferential policy discriminates. The refusal to acknowledge this simple truth has wrought more destruction in higher education than has the preferential policy itself.

One of the invidious consequences of this denial is that, since they cannot acknowledge individual instances of injustice, leftist ideologues are increasingly driven to doctrines that indict entire biologically-defined classes of people. When they write about white people or men, for example, some of the more rabid Afrocentrists or radical feminists start to sound like Hitler talking about the Jews. Moderate leftists might not like being tarred with this brush; but how many among them have spoken out against this new form of racist and sexist bigotry? Who in the TDC has done so? Recently I attended a conference on "The War against Bigotry," and with the exception of the plenary speaker who was a member of the NAS, not one of the panelists whom I listened to—many of whom were powerful university administrators—seemed to question his or her right to impose a highly politicized left-wing conception of what constitutes punishable racism, sexism, homophobia, and so forth, on the college community. From my point of view, several of these people were advancing totalitarian doctrines; yet they seemed to have no inkling of the lines of argument that might lead a person like myself to such a conclusion. How have our academic debates come to be so one-sided? When I view spectacles such as these, I find Professor Demastes' reasonableness and moderation, much as I like these qualities in themselves, hard to credit.

Since most of my Philology Club talk has been published in *Surviving the PC University*, I will refer readers to that essay for the evidence that I collected (as of 1990) on LSU English Department hiring practices. I would like to observe, however, that several of Professor Demastes' characterizations of my views are inaccurate and seem to depend more on what critics have said about me than on what I have said myself. Yet on the matter of politically discriminatory hiring practices in general, I would like to propose a simple test. Current affirmative action and quota law assumes that, in the absence of discrimination, groups will be proportionately represented. To me, this assumption is a mindless one; but since it has acquired such force in the political arena, let us apply it to groups that the academic left does not like. Are political conservatives and Christian fundamentalists proportionately represented among faculties of humanities departments? If they are not, does this not prove that they have been victims of discrimination? When I presented this argument in the past, my leftist interlocutors seemed reluctant to concede that statistical disparities were significant when the underrepresentation of Republicans or fundamentalists was in question. But why not? Is this now simply another instance of leftist double standards?

When such double standards are firmly entrenched and discourse is completely dominated by a single set of perspectives, discussions of "political correctness" will not arise in the classroom, to be sure, since they do not need to. Tyranny produces its own calm. It is precisely such a calm that some leftists seem to have in view when they talk about moving "beyond" the culture wars. Yet I do believe that there are still leftists who are sincere in their desire to act rightly and to bring about a betterment of the human condition. It is incumbent upon these persons, now that they are in power, to acknowledge frankly the abuses of their own party—which need not reflect discreditably on the validity of their underlying aims—and to recreate conditions where free and honest debate can occur once again.

You cannot trample on the human conscience forever. If the leftist academic establishment does not undertake the responsibility of rectifying its wrongs, in the end it will be repudiated and its works will all be torn down. For sincere leftists, the time to speak out is now.

Keep Us Informed

Is there a debate on your campus about "political correctness"? Keep us informed about the culture wars in your area by sending us clippings from local newspapers and reports about what's going on.

NEWSCHIPS

and hypocrises of the anti-PC warriors. For this we make no apology.

White replies in the same issue by suggesting that because the TDC statement of principles makes no mention of Marxism among the "recent curricular reforms" we defend, it must be obvious that TDC is against Marxism. He goes on to invoke the names of Noam Chomsky and Gayatri Spivak against us, as if TDC would repudiate them and vice versa.

We wonder what White would have said if he had known that Chomsky and Spivak are both members of TDC—along with innumerable other Marxists and others influenced by Marxism.

TDC plans to make its directory of members available on e-mail to those who request it. Perhaps White might change his view of TDC after seeing our list of members.

Right-Wing PC at Converse College

John K. Wilson

Imagine what would happen if a conservative college president was forced out of office by liberals for her political views. The story would make national headlines, wouldn't it, as columnists cried out against "political correctness" and the "liberal orthodoxy"?

But after conservative trustees and alumnae of South Carolina's Converse College forced out president Ellen Wood Hall in May, no conservatives spoke out in protest. On the contrary, the latest issue of the conservative national newspaper *Campus* (Fall 1993) salutes the compelled resignation in an article titled, "Trustees & Alumnae Save School from P.C. Outsider."

The article by Nick Felton praises the "trustee inquiry and oversight of politically correct excesses" which led to Hall's resignation. Hall is described as a "radical feminist" and "an academically trendy liberal who was out of touch with alumnae and the long-standing traditions and character of the 103 year-old private school." Among the crimes committed under Hall's leadership were "'experience-based' learning which included field trips to Harlem and sleepovers in shanties erected on college lawns." Felton also explains that "speakers brought to Converse were overwhelming left-of-center," even though student groups, not Hall, invited them to campus.

NEWSCLIPS

One alumna criticized Hall because she is "short, with short gray hair that is not in the least bit attractive, and wears godawful clothes," contrasting her with the "dignified, wonderful men" with "high morals and wonderful backgrounds" who were past presidents. Conservative alumnae also criticized the hiring of dean of students Cynthia Greer, a black woman, as "unnecessary" because only 8% of students are black.

Homophobia characterized many of the attacks. The conservatives forced out Greer for being "intemperate" because she argued with a member of the ad hoc committee investigating Hall who proposed banning lesbians from the school. As Felten writes, "The last straw for many alumnae was the formation of a lesbian support group and the 'marriage' of two female freshman[sic]." But there was no support group, only an informal meeting of some students with a counselor to talk about lesbianism.

The tactics of the alumnae and trustees were particularly effective. They tried to discourage students from attending the college, and withheld financial contributions, which exacerbated the problems caused by previous financial mismanagement.

But these conservatives do not represent the majority of Converse College. Within 48 hours, half of the student body signed a petition opposing Hall's resignation. Last fall, both the trustees and the faculty gave a vote of confidence to Hall.

Felton writes, "With more courageous and responsible boards of trustees and alumni like Converse's, higher education could be reformed overnight." It's a frightening thought that Ellen Wood Hall may not be the last college president to face this kind of intimidation.

The Other Affirmative Action

John K. Wilson

While tirades against affirmative action are common, the most disturbing form of affirmative action—preferences for children of alumni, known as legacies—is invariably ignored by conservative critics. Yet John Lamb, writing in the Spring 1993 *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems*, observes that "applicants who are children of alumni receive an advantage greater than that enjoyed by any minority student."

The Children of ReaganBush

Michael Schwalbe

MY FAVORITE COURSE to teach is Sociology 203, social problems. As I teach it, the course examines the ways in which race, class, and gender inequalities create a great deal of surplus misery in everyday life for most people in the U.S. No other course I teach allows me to draw on as wide a range of ideas and information to help students understand how our society works and how its workings affect their lives. No other course causes me as much grief, either.

I first started teaching social problems in 1981. Back then I would respond to challenges from conservative students by beating them over the head with logic and facts. I was a graduate student at the time, and I figured that the best way to change minds was by force of superior knowledge. If this strategy made some kids squirm a bit, well, too bad. It was time they saw the light.

My strategy of getting in their faces was not wholly unsuccessful. It did cause some conservative kids to think differently. Or so I imagined. But there remained a few whose response to my critical analyses of capitalist America was to seethe quietly. They refused to engage with my arguments because it seemed clear to them that I hadn't a clue about their thoughts and feelings. "Why bother?" I suppose they thought.

After a few semesters I learned how to rouse these folks. Whenever I saw that something was making them uneasy or causing them to tune out, I would invite them to voice their objections, but then instead of pouncing and trouncing, I would take up their objections as my own, flesh them out, and articulate them better than they could. The effect was stunning.

Now the conservative kids couldn't write me off as ignorant of where they were coming from. They were shook up and primed to hear what came next. So after articulating their arguments, I would carefully explain why I didn't embrace those arguments myself. Now the logic and facts hit home. I thought I'd found the key to opening and changing minds.

In 1993 my key doesn't work anymore. The conservative kids are different. During the past 12 years these children of ReaganBush have imbibed a fundamentalist version of conservative thought that eschews argument.

As recently as six years ago the conservative students were more willing to argue. If they disagreed with me they would try to say why. It seemed to matter to them to be able to make a good case for where they stood. This commitment to reason made a big difference in the classroom. It meant that my students were open to thinking differently if I could show them that they were using faulty facts or logic. These days my most conservative students give little sign of being open to thinking differently, or of being much impressed by facts and logic.

In the past few years I've found it increasingly hard to get conservative students to argue seriously. Oh, they will disagree, vehemently; but they seem unable to construct an argument that is more than a barrage of slogans. Every semester now I hear, "Feminism has done women more harm than good"; "Blacks today are the real racists"; "It's been proven that socialism doesn't work"; "A capitalist is just a successful worker"; "Trying to create social equality always produces the opposite result."

Though it makes my stomach turn, I can do my old trick with any of these statements. I can argue for them in a way that gets the attention of my conservative students—and disconcerts my liberal students. But then when I try to show what's wrong with these statements, and the beliefs they rest upon, my conservative students get impatient and tune out. Or they just repeat the original statement like an incantation, as if its power were undiminished by the exposure of its rotten foundations.

Anti-intellectualism is nothing new in American culture, and nor perhaps is the invincible ignorance of my most conservative students. But I sense something different here, because these kids are neither stupid nor totally ignorant of the grim state of U.S. society. Something else, something more insidious than reactionary Limbaugh-style rhetoric, is locking up their minds.

It is tempting to cite postmodernist beliefs about knowledge as the problem. Many of my students, both conservative and liberal, believe either that all truth claims are relative and self-serving, or that truth is a matter of what you believe deep in your heart. In either case they feel there's not much to be gained by jointly seeking a better version of the truth, since people already have the version that best suits them. Thus to argue about what is true is pointless and, worse, not nice.

But I think the source of the problem is simpler and more concrete than creeping postmodernism. What I think is undermining my students' willingness to think critically is fear. This is fear based on an undeniable truth they've learned from watching

the country these past 12 years.

What they've learned is that if you don't fit in, you'll get hurt. It's plain to see that good jobs are scarce and getting scarcer, and that when people lose their jobs they can end up living in the street, impoverished, abused. In a country like this, worrying about truth and social justice is likely to get you in trouble. Rock the boat and you'll get thrown overboard. No rescue forthcoming.

One irony here is that while some of my most conservative students will deny the existence, or extent, of many social problems, they dread becoming victims of the injustice that they know, in their heart of hearts, abounds in our society. Another irony is that while they claim to hate collectivism, they fear not fitting in, because this would jeopardize their chances to acquire the kind of material wealth and social status they've been taught to want.

The fear these kids have grows also out of powerlessness. They may not know the details about how the world works, but they do know that money (what the professor calls "capital") calls the shots. And since most of these kids are coming from working- or middle-class homes, nothing is guaranteed for them. To achieve a little upward mobility, or merely to reproduce their parents' class status, they're going to have to cozy up to power. They see no realistic alternatives.

No one who experiences this sort of fear and powerlessness is well situated to think critically and creatively. Instead of engaging in risky and fruitless thinking about how to change a bad system, one schemes about how to find a comfortable place in it. Individual powerlessness also helps rationalize selfishness: "If some folks can't figure out how to find a place in the system, or even if they never got a fair shot at it, well, that's a shame but there's nothing I can do about it. Those folks should just try harder, like me."

It's not only the conservative kids who are scared and in the grip of an ideology of competitive individualism. Most of my students are. And all are children of ReaganBush in the sense of growing up as witnesses to a heartless economy and violent polity.

In 20 years these children of ReaganBush will come of age politically. If they continue to act fearfully and selfishly and assume the worst about human nature, we will be in great danger. Much therefore depends on the social justice achieved between now and then. We must prove to this generation, and the next, that it is possible to do better than what they've seen so far. Mere telling won't work. We are going to have to prove by doing.

My conservative students' refusal to try to argue well still bothers me. But my own biography gives me reason for hope. When I began college 19 years ago I too bedeviled my liberal professors with the racist and sexist prejudices I brought with me from a white ethnic, working-class home. Then again, I witnessed different political events as I grew up, so maybe now I am just echoing the spirit of a more optimistic time. I wouldn't have gotten here, though, if it hadn't been for a lot of good arguments along the way.

Michael Schwalbe teaches sociology at North Carolina State University.

Retired from Indoctrination

Terence M. Ripmaster

I SUPPOSE THE FUNNIEST proposition that ever came from the new right neocons was the notion that a giant leftist cadre had entered higher education and indoctrinated a generation of otherwise innocent and decent students into becoming raving revolutionaries. This same subversive cadre has been accused of conspiring against "Western" values and causing everything from the breakdown of the "traditional" family to the trade deficit.

I have retired from my college position after 30 years of teaching at what I would call a typical state college. I think my experience is reflective of many of us who entered higher education in the 1960s and who have been associated with the so-called radicalization of a generation of students. My education was hidebound and traditional. I never questioned my grade school or college textbooks or teachers as they "taught" me what I later came to know as the fictions of Western and American culture. I assumed that there was nothing in the texts about women, minorities and working people because these groups simply had no history. I still have my college US history textbook that depicts "Negroes" as happy slaves, dancing and playing their banjos on the plantations.

By the time I graduated from an excellent Midwestern university, I knew of only one female writer, George Eliot. In political science, economics and related social sciences, I had been doused in Cold War ideology, capitalism and male-oriented notions of the human character and social programs. I later came to call this the "father knows best" version of history and society. The universe was dominated by what Gore Vidal calls male "sky gods" and our life on Earth was controlled by "great" men.

NEWSCLIPS

An Education Department Office of Civil Rights investigation of discrimination against Asian-Americans at Harvard found a wide discrepancy in the admission rates of children of alumni, recruited athletes, and regular applicants. From 1981 to 1988, Harvard admitted 16.9% of all applicants, but 35.7% of alumni children and 48.7% of athletes. In the class of 1992, 15.6% of all applicants, but 35.2% of alumni children and 41.0% of athletes, were admitted. If legacies had been admitted at the same rate as other applicants, their numbers would drop by nearly 200, greater than all of the Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans admitted to Harvard.

On every academic scale, including class rank and academic ratings, the legacies admitted to Harvard from 1983 to 1992 were inferior to regular admittees. Regular students had combined SAT scores 35 points higher than legacies, and 130 points higher than the athletes. Considering that the children of Harvard alumni include many top students, the fact that they are below-average as a group suggests that the legacy preference is quite strong. The OCR report concluded, "It is evident from some of these readers' comments that being the son or daughter of an alumnus of Harvard/Radcliffe was the critical or decisive factor in admitting the applicant."

Surprisingly, the inquiry did not regard legacy preferences as objectionable. The OCR concluded that the apparent discrimination against Asian-Americans was largely explained by the preferences given to legacies and athletes. The report noted, "While these preferences have an adverse effect on Asian-Americans, we determined that they were long-standing and legitimate, and not a pretext for discrimination."

Unlike affirmative action for underrepresented minorities, which seeks to compensate for past wrongs and establish racial equality, the legacy preference serves no noble purpose. On the contrary, it provides advantages to the most advantaged groups. The sole justification given for legacy preferences is the unproven claim that elite private colleges need them to get money from alumni. The legacy preference has nothing to do with an individual's accomplishments or ability to contribute some unique talent. It is time for colleges to end this deplorable and discriminatory practice.

Democratic Culture—Page 9

NEWSCLIPS

Does Diversity Hurt Students?

John K. Wilson

Multiculturalism has been attacked for promoting ethnic Balkanization and racial segregation on campus, as well as for lowering academic standards. But a recent study by Alexander Astin, *What Matters in College*, indicates that multiculturalism improves racial harmony and intellectual standards.

Astin examined institutional variables like affirmative action and multiculturalism, as well as individual variables such as taking Women's Studies or ethnic studies courses, participating in awareness workshops, discussing racial and ethnic issues, and socializing with people from other racial and ethnic groups. He found: "Generally speaking, all these institutional and individual environmental experiences were associated with greater self-reported gains in cognitive and affective development (especially increased cultural awareness), with increased satisfaction in most areas of the college experience, and with increased commitment to promoting racial understanding."

Students who had such experiences were also less likely to have materialistic values or to believe that an individual cannot change society. Astin concludes, "the weight of the empirical evidence shows that the actual effects on student development of emphasizing diversity and of student participation in diversity activities are overwhelmingly positive."

"The National Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities are hardly surrogates for a European ministry of culture. The foundations are more plausible candidates for that designation. Even they are hybrids, half private, half public...The French state, by contrast, has always been involved in culture."

—Norman Birnbaum, *Searching for the Light: Essays on Thought and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

If someone had told me in 1960 that I would be part of an educational and social revolt in America, I would have laughed at them. I simply replicated the views that I had been taught. I wish there was a way I could contact every student from that period of my teaching and send a personal apology. There is no need here to account for my journey into dissent from the "traditional" values: The Civil Rights movements, the endless Cold War, the corporate takeover of America in all of its dimensions, and the emergence of a radical critique. Like many of us, I had to re-learn almost everything I had been taught and thought, and it was painful and difficult. And when I began to teach students the unsanitized account of international and national history, I was dubbed a radical.

For a brief time in the late 1960s and early 1970s there appeared a group of students who were excited about new directions and new ideas. While these students were often disruptive and misguided, they had an energy and concern that was infectious. They became involved in campus and national issues and made tremendous demands on my time. But suddenly, they disappeared and by the mid-1970s, the disco generation took their place. America veered to the far right and so did the students. From the late 1970s to the present, the largest organizations at my campus have been the Young Republicans, fraternities, and the ski club. The two largest majors are business and communication. The college catalogue is packed with courses on accounting, management, and television production.

My students openly stated that they would not take a single history or social science course if they were not required for graduation. They have not the foggiest notion of how national or international economic systems work, and avoid the study of economics as if it were a plague. They have no interest in the American political system and are hard put to explain the differences between a liberal and a conservative. They support American wars without question; the day after Desert Storm began, most of them were wearing yellow ribbons and their cars were covered with "support our troops" stickers. With few exceptions, they are for the death penalty, even after I present the statistics about who are the victims of execution. They feel there is nothing wrong with a $5 billion-per-week military budget and agree that criminalization will solve the drug problem.

As for issues related to PC and debates over the academic canon and multiculturalism, they couldn't care less. When I cover the long history of racism and sexism in my courses, I usually get the response: "Well, we're not responsible for all of that!" Most of them feel that blacks and other minorities are given too many breaks and openly state that they think unqualified blacks get the jobs over qualified whites. The college increases their tuition every year and many of them work at minimum wage jobs. They have no interest even in confronting their own economic well-being; a statewide anti-tuition march at the state capital was joined by eight of the 10,000 students.

From conversations with my colleagues at other colleges and universities and accounts in journals and the media, the above description of undergraduate students does not seem to be exaggerated, which should delight Cheney et. al. Much of the national debate about PC and indoctrination is useless because it ignores how little has changed. The media, textbooks, teaching, and curriculum are still based on the Eurocentered, America-knows-best white man's interpretation of history and ideas. Every major professional field is still dominated by men. Any teacher who presents a critique of this society is isolated, denigrated, often not retained, and labeled as a radical, Communist, or troublemaker.

A dean, upon hearing of my retirement, said: "He is crazy, but he was an excellent teacher." Of course, she probably did not mean that I was certifiably insane and required institutionalization. On the day I heard about the dean's comments, I walked to the library across the college yard filled with students; the library was nearly empty.

The neocons have nothing to worry about. The graying radicals of the 1960s are departing, and at least at my college, there will be no trouble from the present generation of undergraduates.

Terence Ripmaster taught history at William Paterson College.

WRITE FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

We need your writing to create this newsletter. We are looking for letters, essays, book reviews, and reports on the latest events of interest to our members.

Send your submissions to:

Teachers for a Democratic Culture • P.O. Box 6405 • Evanston, IL 60204

The Raging Water Buffalo

John K. Wilson

The Hackney Nomination

THE CAMPAIGN OF misinformation and ideological attacks against Sheldon Hackney has failed to derail his nomination as chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which was confirmed by a 76-23 vote in the Senate on August 3, 1993. Hackney was never the real target of these attacks. He was a moderate caught in the middle of the crossfire in the war against political correctness, who almost had his nomination mortally wounded. As Jesse Helms put it, "Mr. Hackney's problem is that he is recognized as one of the most prominent apologists for political correctness."

But much of what was reported about Hackney was badly distorted or simply false, as when the *Wall Street Journal* (echoed by Jesse Helms) attacked Hackney because "he spoke out in favor of kicking ROTC from Penn unless the military began to admit openly gay men and lesbians." But Hackney says, "I am a supporter of ROTC on campus," and in 1983, after the University of Pennsylvania Law School banned military recruiters from the campus because they violated the school's rules about discrimination based on sexual orientation, Hackney reversed the decision, declaring that "the policies of the U.S. armed forces are not now illegal in Philadelphia or elsewhere."

The official story about the "water buffalo" incident at the University of Pennsylvania is well-known by now. In January, a group of black sorority women were making noise outside a dorm late at night. Eden Jacobowitz, who was trying to study in his dorm room, yelled at them, "Shut up, you water buffaloes!" and "If you're looking for a party, there's a zoo a mile from here." Water buffalo, we have been repeatedly told, "has no known racial connotations" and is a loose translation of a Hebrew insult meaning both "water oxen" and a "thoughtless person." A "Kafkaesque" trial made him, in the words of the *Wall Street Journal*, "the latest victim of the ideological fever known as political correctness."

The other side of the story has been almost universally omitted from reports of the incident. As the women noted when they dropped the charges, "In an atmosphere of being called the 'N' word and sexually demeaning words...someone yelled, 'Shut up, you black water buffaloes!' and 'Go back to the zoo where you belong!'"

Is it unreasonable to think, when racist and sexist epithets are being shouted, that a student might have some racist motives when he compares a group of African-Americans to animals and says they ought to be put in a zoo? The fact that Jacobowitz's phrase was derived from a Hebrew insult and is not a common racial epithet hardly makes it immune from *use* in a racist way. There is sufficient doubt in this case to argue that Jacobowitz deserved no punishment, and almost certainly he would not have gotten any at the disciplinary hearing. However, there was enough evidence to justify a hearing to investigate the issue, and to suspect Jacobowitz of having some racial motives. If it is legitimate for a university to punish the use of racial epithets, then surely it is acceptable to investigate a reasonable allegation of one.

When a group of students makes plausible charges of harassment, what should a university president do? Can or should the president study every disciplinary controversy and then decide whether it deserves a further hearing? Or should he allow the regular university disciplinary processes to work at determining the facts of the case? Hackney noted, "I did not think the charge of racial harassment was justified," but he added, "There is no provision for the President or for any officer of the University to intervene."

The misinformation about the "water buffalo" story has not merely unfairly maligned Hackney for entirely reasonable and proper actions, it has also obscured what really happened. A group of black women who were subjected to racist and sexist abuse have been transformed into ruthless PC oppressors while an obnoxious student has became the latest in a long line of conservatives declaring themselves helpless victims of censorship.

The second incident which created a national controversy involving Hackney occurred on April 15, 1993, when a group of black students took the 14,200 press run of the *Daily Pennsylvanian* because it included a column written by conservative Gregory Pavlik, who had criticized affirmative action and Martin Luther King, Jr. A flier left

continued on the next page

"A Forum in Which All Voices Can Be Heard"

Excerpts from June 26, 1993 statement by Sheldon Hackney

I believe my twenty years of major responsibility in universities has prepared me to lead the National Endowment for the Humanities. For the past generation, universities have provided tough environments. University presidents operate in a sea of powerful and conflicting currents. To succeed, one must have a clear sense of strategic direction, a fundamental commitment to the core values of the University, the strength to persevere through contentious times, and the ability to gain and keep the support of a variety of constituencies. I have not only survived in that environment, I have prospered, and my institutions have thrived.

Among the values that I hold dear is a belief that a university ought to be open to all points of view, even if some of those views expressed are personally abhorrent. I take some pride in having protected the right to speak of such diverse controversial figures as Robert Shockley at Princeton, King Hussein of Jordan at Tulane, and Louis Farrakhan at Penn. The university should belong to all of its members and not be the exclusive domain of any particular person, group, or point of view....

Universities exist to create new knowledge and to preserve and communicate knowledge. The NEH, as a sort of university without walls, through its research, education, and public programs, is engaged in the same effort. I am dedicated to the proposition that we can improve the human condition through knowledge and that our hope for tomorrow in this troubled world depends on the sort of understanding that can come through learning....

I like to think of the humanities as human beings recording and thinking about human experience and the human condition, preserving the best of the past and deriving new insights in the present. One of the things that the NEH can do is to conduct a national conversation around the big questions: what is the meaning of life, what is a just society, what is the nature of duty, and so on. In this big conversation, it is not the function of the NEH to provide answers but to ensure a discussion, to create a forum in which all voices can be heard.

Because they are not just for the few but for everyone, no single approach to the NEH mandate is adequate. There is a need for balance among research aimed at creating new knowledge, educational programs to ensure that the humanities are creatively and invitingly represented in the curricula of our schools and colleges, and public programs to draw everyone into the big conversation.

behind declared, "we are protesting the blatant and voluntary perpetuation of institutional racism against the Black community." Such deplorable and indefensible attempts to suppress conservative views are intolerable in a university which promotes free expression of ideas, and ought to be punished by codes that (unlike Penn's) specifically prohibit such behavior.

But the removal of these newspapers has become secondary to the effort to get Hackney. In what has become the most famous statement by a university president in recent memory, Hackney declared after the incident, "two important university values now stand in conflict... diversity and open expression." While not an inaccurate description of the problem, this statement seemed to support the idea that Hackney was a weak-willed president.

But in a display of sloppy journalism all too typical of the coverage on political correctness, every one of the dozens of stories in the mainstream media about the incident omitted what else Hackney said. As Hackney wrote to the *New York Times* (June 16), "After saying that diversity and open expression seemed to be in conflict, I made it clear that 'there can be no compromise regarding the First Amendment right of an independent publication to express whatever views it chooses.' I also reaffirmed a ban on such confiscations that I promulgated four years earlier."

While Hackney should have been more explicit in condemning the behavior (as he admitted in the hearing on his nomination), it is understandable for a university president to take a conciliatory approach in order to defuse tensions and ensure that the "protest" does not happen again. In contrast, there is no excuse for the misleading reporting of his statement, which has been widely disseminated as fact.

Senator Dan Coates told Hackney, "you became a symbol" of political correctness. But like the attacks on political correctness, the criticisms of Hackney have been vicious distortions of the truth. It is worth noting that when Hackney had the opportunity to explain what really happened, in front of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, it supported him unanimously. Even Stephen Balch, president of the NAS, called Hackney "an intelligent, open-minded man of integrity" and "a figure of genuine stature in higher education."

Unfortunately, the media distortions of what happened at the University of Pennsylvania will haunt Hackney during his tenure at the NEH. It is a foregone conclusion that the biased stories, in willful ignorance of the facts, will be repeated in the dozens of conservative articles and books which appear annually. As always, the truth will be less important than perpetuating the story about the evils of political correctness.

If there is a silver lining to this dark cloud of bad journalism, it is Hackney's reaction to these events. At his hearing, Hackney spoke up for freedom of expression and declared, "The NEH should not have a social agenda...It is not a social laboratory." Hackney also has commented that since he would be criticized no matter what he did, "I might as well do what I think is right." He added, "If that leads to controversy, I hope it is a productive controversy." While this may be a vain hope, it suggests that the NEH may have a leader who is determined not to manipulate the agency to serve his ideological aims, who is not afraid of controversy, and who can deal with the inevitable attacks from conservatives.

John K. Wilson is a graduate student in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Statements excerpted here can be found in the August 2, 1993 Congressional Record.

"My Future Was Almost Ruined"

Statement of Eden Jacobowitz

My story like so many others at Penn reflect the university's and Mr. Hackney's tendency to restrict free speech whenever the voice is not speaking correctly in their view. That is—politically correct in their view. As you probably already know, on Wednesday, January 13, I shouted "Shut up you water buffalo!" at a group of sorority women who were stomping their feet, shouting and screaming outside my dormitory window at approximately 11:30 p.m. I later learned that because of this truly innocent response to disruptive noise, racial harassment charges had been filed against me. I was in complete shock that anyone had taken my words racially, and I made it clear to the university's judicial officers and to Dr. Hackney that the race of the women was of total indifference to me. I explained that as an Israeli-born orthodox Jew raised on Hebrew, the term "water buffalo" derived from the Hebrew word "behemeh" which translates literally into "water oxen" and simply means "foolish person" in Hebrew slang. I do not understand how a university which prides itself on diversity, did not accept my culture....

I would like to make it clear that the real issue here is not racial harassment. The real issue is freedom of speech. I established my innocence from the beginning. The reason this case was able to drag on so long is because the university has a speech code limiting the Constitutional rights of students. By the standards of that speech code, I should have been found innocent. But because it was in the hands of incompetent and cruel judicial officers and an apathetic University President, my future was almost ruined.

"Taking Newspapers Is Wrong"

Hackney's statement of April 22, 1993 to the University of Pennsylvania

Freedom of expression is essential to academic life. At Penn it is foremost among our core values, and we are committed to upholding it. The University has long-established policies to protect it.

Taking newspapers is wrong, as I made clear in a policy statement four years ago and reiterated at the time of last week's events and restated again this week.

Those who are accused of violations of University policies will be subject to the provisions of the University's judicial system. Due process in determining the guilt or innocence of any accused party is essential. We shall not take shortcuts.

I recognize that the concerns of members of Penn's minority community that gave rise to last week's protest are serious and legitimate. We have worked hard to make Penn a place in which everyone could feel full membership. The University is, and will remain, committed to that goal, and it is working diligently to achieve it.

In the final analysis, the aim of a diverse and free forum for ideas in which all are welcome and able to participate will be achieved only when all members of the community listen more carefully to the views and concerns of others. I urge the *Daily Pennsylvanian*'s staff and editors and those who object to its editorial, reportorial and staffing practices to work together to resolve their common concerns....

A modern university is the focus for all of the tensions that exist in our society. As such, it must remain steadfast in its commitment to all of its core values, especially when those tensions produce conflicts that we must work to resolve. We shall not do less.

"Orwellian Truisms"

Senator Joseph Lieberman, August 2, 1993

Instead of condemning that act in unequivocal terms for what it was—an outrageous assault on freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and a criminal act, namely, the theft of newspapers that did not belong to them—instead of doing that, Dr. Hackney's immediate reaction was to express sympathy with the students' frustration that led them to steal the newspapers. That is nonsense....

Dr. Hackney did pay tribute in his statement to the preeminence of free speech in our society. But as I read that statement, that elevation of free speech was smothered in a statement that was otherwise loaded with the kind of Orwellian truisms on the so-called conflict between free speech and diversity that also have become too common on our campuses.

The Function of NEH in an Age of Conflict

(This statement has been sent to the National Endowment for the Humanities)

Gerald Graff and Gregory Jay

AS WE ALL know, the last decade has seen an unprecedented degree of public conflict over the nature and function of the academic humanities, and this conflict has inevitably engulfed the National Endowment. Since traditionally the NEH has sought to remain above controversy, if only to avoid favoring some interest groups over others, this state of affairs poses serious problems. How should the NEH respond when the humanities becomes a battleground in a larger "culture war" over such issues as multiculturalism, political correctness, and the direction of American education?

In our view, such changed conditions require a rethinking of NEH's traditional attitude toward controversy. We believe that one of the most useful functions that can be played by the NEH at the present time is to nourish and advance the present controversies over the humanities, transforming them from unproductive name-calling bouts into debates that help Americans understand the issues at hand.

This is a policy that could be carried out, for example, by a series of NEH-sponsored national conferences that focus on key humanities controversies. The conferences might take up such contentious topics as recent revisions in the humanities canon, political correctness, the place of class, race, and gender in humanities scholarship, and the extent to which political advocacy is or is not legitimate in the classroom.

The conferences, in other words, would address precisely those questions that have preoccupied NEH reports such as "To Reclaim a Legacy," "Humanities in America," and "Telling the Truth." Instead of polemicizing for a partisan view of the issues, however, as those reports tended to do, the NEH would now be seeking to improve the and clarify the terms of the debate.... Creating a more useful and illuminating public debate could also be an aim of some NEH-sponsored research projects and seminars, and of state humanities council activities.

If we have learned anything from recent skirmishes, it seems, it is that, paradoxically, the more NEH seeks to insulate itself from controversy the uglier the resulting controversy will tend to be. By facilitating reasoned controversy, NEH can help make the national debate less angry and antagonistic.

1994 TDC Conference

A TDC national conference is being planned for Fall, 1994, on the topic, "The Politics and Ethics of Teaching." We encourage members to send us ideas.

The Case for Speech Codes

John K. Wilson

SHELDON HACKNEY reflected a common sentiment when he told the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, "I think that a speech code, caught up in punishments through judicial procedure, is wrong. We proved that this spring." The *Wall Street Journal* declares: "No overhauling can fix what is wrong with university harassment codes, which deserve to be consigned to oblivion along with their bizarre 'legal' machinery." The *Washington Post*, attacking "Speech Code Silliness," editorialized against "the misuse and basic unfairness of speech codes" and "their ineffectiveness in dealing with the real problems raised by student clashes of a racial nature."

However, speech codes, if properly written and enforced, need not be discarded. On the contrary, speech codes can serve to broaden freedom of speech and intellectual inquiry by preventing the abuse and harassment which inhibits free exchange of ideas.

Ironically, the same people who attack the University of Pennsylvania for having a speech code also criticize it for failing to punish a group of black students who took the entire press run of the student newspaper. But how do they propose to punish these students, if not by a code which limits student behavior? However deplorable their actions, the paper-snatchers are right about the law: Without a specific rule against it, students can take as many copies of a free newspaper as they wish. Attempts to twist the meaning of existing codes to deal with this kind of censorship are clearly unconstitutional, and it was wise for Penn to drop the charges against the students.

The answer is not to abolish all speech codes and leave us with the intellectual equivalent of a Wild West shootout where anything goes. Nor is the answer to go back to vague and arbitrary conduct codes which are even more easily abused than the current speech codes. Instead, we must adopt specific and narrow speech codes which can regulate certain kinds of abusive speech and behavior—such as threats, harassment, and the mass theft of newspapers—without endangering the free expression of offensive ideas.

This is not a radical idea. Conservative opponents of speech codes support regulation of certain kinds of speech. Former Solicitor General Charles Fried has suggested banning "unwanted invective" because there is a right "to be in a public or private place in relative tranquility." Dinesh D'Souza declares, "I'm not a free speech absolutist" and suggests as a code: "Students shall not yell racial epithets at each other." Columnist George Will notes that an academic community "requires a particular atmosphere of civility that can be incompatible with unrestricted expression." The National Association of Scholars proclaims: "Tolerance is a core value of academic life, as is civility. College authorities should ensure that these values prevail."

Alan Charles Kors, who defended Eden Jacobowitz, says that a university "should have a code of behavior that specifies punishments for physical violence, threats, and intimidations, and breaches of academic integrity; its students should have, at the very least, the same rights and freedoms of choice as their working peers who take jobs away from home." Nadine Strossen admits, "The Supreme Court never has held, and civil libertarians never have argued, that harassing, intimidating, or assaultive conduct should be immunized simply because it consists in part of words." And even free speech absolutist Nat Hentoff states, "Any systematic, repeated verbal harassment that substantially interferes with the target's functioning is not protected speech."

Some speech codes, such as at the University of Michigan, have been written too broadly and interpreted poorly, which led to their being declared unconstitutional. But other speech codes, such as at Stanford, are narrowly tailored and have been unfairly accused of censorship by opponents. These narrow speech codes, when they prohibit only abusive speech specifically directed at an individual with hateful intent, can protect students from harassment without endangering the expression of ideas. Henry Louis Gates notes that the Stanford rules "have rightly been taken as a model of such careful delimitation." Although Gates claims that the Stanford rule "won't do much good," speech codes, when well-written, can improve the campus climate for everyone by punishing egregious acts of intimidation and censorship. No one believes that a speech code alone can create racial harmony on campus. But narrowly tailored speech codes can help protect students against the worst abuses, and it is foolish to dismiss them out of hand.

Democratic Culture—Page 13

Join TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

(The following is excerpted from the 1991 TDC statement of purpose)

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES in the United States have lately begun to serve the majority of Americans better than ever before. Whereas a few short years ago, institutions of higher education were exclusive citadels often closed to women, minorities and the disadvantaged, today efforts are being made to give a far richer diversity of Americans access to a college education. Reforms in the content of the curriculum have also begun to make our classrooms more representative of our nation's diverse peoples and beliefs and to provide a more truthful account of our history and cultural heritage. Much remains to be done, but we can be proud of the progress of democratization in higher education.

A vociferous band of critics has arisen, however, who decry these changes and seek to reverse them. These critics have painted an alarming picture of the state of contemporary education as a catastrophic collapse. This picture rests on a number of false claims: that the classics of Western civilization are being eliminated from the curriculum in order to make race, gender or political affiliation the sole measure of a text's or subject's worthiness to be taught; that teachers across the land are being silenced and politically intimidated; that the very concepts of reason, truth and artistic standards are being subverted in favor of a crude ideological agenda.

It is our view that recent curricular reforms influenced by multiculturalism and feminism have greatly enriched education rather than corrupted it. It is our view as well that the controversies that have been provoked over admissions and hiring practices, the social functions of teaching and scholarship, and the status of such concepts as objectivity and ideology are signs of educational health, not decline.

Contrary to media reports, it is the National Association of Scholars, their corporate foundation supporters and like-minded writers in the press who are endangering education with a campaign of harassment and misrepresentation. Largely ignorant of the academic work they attack (often not even claiming to have read it), these critics make no distinction between extremists among their opposition and those who are raising legitimate questions about the relations of culture and society. And though these critics loudly invoke the values of rational debate and open discussion, they present the current debate over education not as a legitimate conflict in which reasonable disagreement is possible but as a simple choice between civilization and barbarism.

Yet because the mainstream media have reported misinformed opinions as if they were established facts, the picture the public has received of recent academic developments has come almost entirely from the most strident detractors of these developments....

It is time for those who believe in the values of democratic education and reasoned dialogue to join together in an organization that can fight such powerful forms of intolerance and answer mischievous misrepresentations. We support the right of scholars and teachers to raise questions about the relations of culture, scholarship and education to politics—not in order to shut down debate on such issues but to open it. It is such a debate that is prevented by discussion-stopping slogans like "political correctness."

What does the notion of a "democratic culture" mean and how does it relate to education? In our view, a democratic culture is one in which criteria of value in art are not permanently fixed by tradition and authority but are subject to constant revision. It is a culture in which terms such as "canon," "literature," "tradition," "artistic value," "common culture" and even "truth" are seen as disputed rather than given. This means not that standards for judging art and scholarship must be discarded but that such standards should evolve out of democratic processes in which they can be thoughtfully challenged.

We understand the problems in any organization claiming to speak for a very diverse, heterogeneous group of teachers who may sharply disagree on many issues, including that of the politics of culture. What we envision is a coalition of very different individuals and groups, bound together by the belief that recent attacks on new forms of scholarship and teaching must be answered in a spirit of principled discussion. We think the very formation of such a group will be an important step in gaining influence over the public representations of us and our work.

It will also be a way to take responsibility for the task of clarifying our ideas and practices to the wider public—something, it must be admitted, that we have not done as well as we should. We need an organization that can not only refute malicious distortions but also educate the interested public about matters that still to often remain shrouded in mystery—new literary theories and movements such as deconstructionism, feminism, multiculturalism and the new historicism, and their actual effects on classroom practice.

We therefore propose the formation of Teachers for a Democratic Culture.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

JOIN TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE WITH THIS FORM

The continuing growth and success of TDC depends on your involvement and your contributions. We ask all current TDC members *to renew their memberships* by returning this form to cover calendar year 1994. We also encourage non-members who have received this newsletter to join us. Please mail this membership form to: Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston IL 60204.

__Yes, I want to become a member of TDC __Yes, I want to renew my membership in TDC

Enclosed is my 1994 contribution of: ___$50 ___$25 ___$5 (students)

Name_____

Department_____ School or Affiliation_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____ Home Address (if preferred)_____

Phone Numbers: Business_____ FAX_____ Home_____ E-mail_____

Critique

continued from front page

rather than breaking with the "banking" model of education in which knowledge is seen as a kind of deposit that the student receives from an authoritative teacher. Instead of imposing their own "thematics" on the people, from the top down, Freirean educators must "re-present to the people their own thematics in systematized and amplified form. The thematics which have come from the people return to them—not as contents to be deposited but as problems to be solved." Freire says that libertarian education "starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own program but must search for this program dialogically with the people."

It is an attractive program in principle, but does Freire remain faithful to it? How real can the Freirean dialogue be, when Freire clearly presumes he knows in advance what the authentic "will of the people" is or should be? However much Freire may insist on teaching "problem-posing" rather than top-down solutions, the goal of teaching for Freire is to move the student toward "a critical perception of the world," and this critical perception "implies a correct method of approaching reality..." It is, as he puts it, "a comprehension of *total* reality."

Though Freirean pedagogy claims to give the oppressed the autonomy to decide for themselves what their transformation will look like, it is clear that for Freire the oppressed are free to decide only within limits. Suppose a student ends up deciding that he or she is *not* oppressed, or is not oppressed in the way or for the reasons Freire supposes? What if, after a Freirean dialogue, the student embraces Rush Limbaugh, or decides that for him or her authentic liberation means joining a corporation and making a lot of money? Freire can only count such decisions as the result of the student's having been brainwashed by the dominant culture....

In any case, whether the student is positioned as the oppressed or the oppressor, the outcome of critical pedagogy is already predetermined. Freire assumes that we know from the outset the identity of the "oppressed" and their "oppressors." He also assumes a student body that will readily accept a description of themselves as the oppressed. This assumption may be understandable in the original context of Freire's work with Latin American peasants. But Freire's model encounters serious problems when it is transplanted to a North American campus, where not all students are obviously members of an oppressed class, and where even many of those who might plausibly fit that designation refuse to accept it.

If Freire assumes a predetermined outcome for the student, he is equally sure what the politics of the teacher must be. In picturing the classroom, Freire and other proponents of critical pedagogy seemingly envisage a teacher who is already committed to social transformation and simply lacks the lesson plan for translating the commitment into practice. The question never arises of what role will be played in a radical curriculum by teachers who do not go along with the lesson plan.

The premise seems to be that radical pedagogy is for those teachers who have already been radicalized—or have decided they wish to be. Presumably, those who decline to join the movement will mind their own business, recognizing like good academics that "it's not my field." The recent uproar over political correctness suggests that, on the contrary, these teachers will strenuously object, and often with good reason. The failure to take seriously the objections of the unpersuaded seems to us a serious limitation of critical pedagogy both on ethical and strategic grounds. It means that critical pedagogy is usually a business of preaching to the converted, leaving the unpersuaded overlooked, alienated, and receptive to the counterpropaganda of conservatives.

Of course, radical pedagogy has no problem construing such resistance as further evidence of complicity in the dominant culture, a response that further exempts the radical teacher from having to criticize his or her own position. This self-congratulatory tactic—if you criticize me you must obviously be a reactionary—is conspicuous among exponents of so-called "oppositional pedagogy" such as Donald Morton and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh. Like Freirean pedagogy of the oppressed, oppositional pedagogy offers itself as training in critique rather than as indoctrination, with "critique" defined as "an investigation of the enabling conditions of discursive practices. It subjects the grounds of the seemingly self-evident discourse to inspection and reveals that what appears to be rational and universal is actually a situated discourse." This version of "critique" is a poststructuralist updating of the notion of ideology articulated by Marx....

Oppositional pedagogy claims to go beyond the pedagogy of the oppressed, however, by positioning the teacher in a frankly "adversarial role in relation to the student," challenging students' presumed complacency about their position in the dominant culture. The teacher is not only authoritatively right about the issues, but is also justified in assuming the inauthenticity of the student's opinions. The teacher "helps reveal the student to himself by showing him how his ideas and positions are the effects of larger discourses (of class, race, and gender, for example), rather than simple, natural manifestations of his consciousness or mind."

Here the helpful oppositional pedagogue is not

NEWSCLIPS

The MLA's "Deceptive" Survey

John K. Wilson

A 1991 MLA survey of college professors concluded there was little evidence that "English faculty members have jettisoned traditional texts and teaching methods in their upper-division literature courses." The MLA data suggested that literature courses are being modified to introduce new views of literature, but the major works and authors remain preeminent.

Will Morrisey, Norman Fruman, and Thomas Short argue in *Academic Questions* (Spring 1993) that "the MLA's own survey proves that the classics have been displaced. For the MLA survey results are indeed surprising: on closer examination they show that things are much worse than the academy's critics have believed." But these writers, not the MLA, are the ones who distort the evidence.

First, Morrisey, Fruman, and Short claim that the MLA survey was deceptive because it selected older, full professors who would favor a "traditionalist" result. But contrary to what they assert, the MLA survey actually exaggerates the extent to which new literary texts and approaches are being used. Although they are right that the survey slightly overrepresented full professors, they neglect to point out that assistant professors were even more overrepresented and the respondents were more likely than the average faculty member to be under 40, to have received their Ph.D. since 1980, and to teach in a Ph.D.-granting program. Thus, the MLA survey overemphasized, rather than underemphasized, the degree to which new texts are being taught and new approaches used.

Morrisey, Fruman, and Short conclude that reading lists have been "diluted" and traditional authors discarded in favor of inferior books. But in response to a question asking teachers of early 19th century American literature to name "up to three works among those that they consistently teach that they consider particularly important," the most frequently named authors were Hawthorne, Thoreau, Melville, Emerson, and Whitman, with these canonical writers comprising 75% of all the responses. They respond to this over-

Democratic Culture—Page 15

whelmingly conventional result by complaining that "43.7 percent of teachers of America do not consider Hawthorne to be one of the three most significant American authors in the first sixty-five years of the nineteenth century."

The MLA survey also found that 61.7% of respondents wanted students to understand the influence of race, class, and gender on literature, while 51% believed it was important for students to "understand the enduring ideas and values of Western civilization." Remarkably, 36% of all respondents espoused both goals. Nevertheless, Morrisey, Fruman, and Short see only conspiracies here, suggesting first that the survey reveals "confusion or a desire to deceive" and finally concluding that politicized professors would want students to understand Western civilization solely in order to attack it.

Morrisey, Fruman, and Short also seek to twist the results of the question asked about which of twelve "theoretical approaches" influenced their teaching. Among the leading theories were history of ideas (76.2%), New Criticism (64.4%), and feminist approaches (60.9%). Disregarding the fact that traditional approaches are at the top of the list, they declare that it is "astounding that the feminist and other politically tendentious approaches to literature have gained so much ground." They conclude, "we have here proof positive that a large majority of English professors have been influenced by the current popular social/political agenda."

Celeste Colgan, one of the leading figures in Cheney's NEH, also noted that 62% of teachers used feminist approaches and 28% Marxist approaches and concluded, "Students exposed to single, polemic approaches to literature are deprived of their freedom to learn." Strangely, the fact that many professors use different approaches to literature is taken by conservatives as a sign of repression, while their refusal to discuss feminist or Marxist ideas is hailed as evidence of open-mindedness. It should be obvious that the way to avoid "single, polemic approaches" is to teach feminist or Marxist approaches along with other methods. But because professors use a wide variety of approaches (4.67 on average), they are condemned without any consideration of *how* they may teach these ideas.

Yet Colgan believes that universities should be subject to the same censor-

content to offer his own position as just one among a number of possible conclusions. More frankly than the Freirean teacher, though ultimately repeating the same gesture, he or she treats each student viewpoint as merely another case of false consciousness to be demystified....

In our view, the definition of categories such as the disenfranchised and the dominant, oppressed and oppressor, should be a *product* of the pedagogical process, not its unquestioned *premise*. So must the way these categories are described, theorized, and historicized. The premise that the classroom, like society, is constituted by a readily identifiable hierarchy of the disenfranchised and the dominant is not unreasonable or indefensible, but it *is* a premise and one that should be as open to criticism as any traditional axiom....

It is difficult to imagine how the students in an oppositional classroom are to form a bond with each other, much less with those who *oppose* their point of view. Critique can succeed only by resorting to persuasion, and persuasion has no chance unless it is willing to respect the resistances of those who are not yet converted. At some point critique has to turn into a positive program that those not yet persuaded will find intellectually satisfying, emotionally desirable, and ethically acceptable. In the end, then, an ethical pedagogy, which poses questions about the relationship between individual good and social good, and between personal character and political action, will be more helpful in orienting a way through and beyond opposition.

Persuasion is political because it aims to address a community about problems and interests that are vital to how people conduct themselves towards each other. Persuasion recognizes the social nature of human life and the necessity of attending to the improvement of the organization of society. Persuasion accepts the plurality of goods, that is, the existence of many different notions of the good life among its audience. Politics is not the implementation of a single truth but the process of structuring the negotiation between differing truths in a manner that respects their claims as much as possible.

We grant that critical pedagogy has its place at the level of individual teaching practices, at least when it is willing to respect the resistance of students. But as long as education is an institution in an overlapping system of democratic processes, the school cannot and should not enforce a program that commits everyone to a predetermined worldview, however just we may believe it is. Theorizing the practice of entire institutions of higher education means thinking from the viewpoint of conservatives, liberals, and others with whom we work, not just from the viewpoint of radicals. This calls for a model of education in which we engage with those who hold the "wrong" politics and will not take our assumptions for granted, that is, a model in which ideological opponents not only coexist but cooperate.

We are not urging radical teachers to back down from their political commitments, but to put these commitments into dialogue with those who would oppose and test them. Since such a dialogue would include countervoices, it would actually enable radical teachers to take *stronger* positions with less danger of coercing students, and more chance of persuading those not already predisposed their way. And it would in turn help students better understand what is at stake in using gender, race, and class as terms of literary and philosophical analysis.

The university we envision, then, would not propagandize for a particular politics, but it would not claim to be simply neutral and above politics. It would dramatize and bring into open discussion the actual political conflicts between agents of intellectual and institutional power. It would bring to public light their arguments, values, and prejudices, thereby serving the purposes of democratic education. Political conflict is essential in this vision of education, but rather than prescribing a predetermined outcome, it makes the question of what politics is, what politics does, and where politics is going part of the process of education.

The Agora of Opinion Is Largely a Men's Club

"Is there an unconscious—or conscious—editorial bias against women's opinions? Or are opinions themselves somehow gendered male—does female socialization conspire against many women's ability or desire to generate a strong public voice?...

The authoritative female voice asserting judgments about the real world is an unseemly voice. The globalizing tone that the conventions of opinion journalism or T.V. debate require involves an assumption of authority that women are actively dissuaded from claiming....

Editors and producers must root out their own often unwitting bias. They are welching on their commitment to inform citizens of a real range of views, leaving half the population ill-prepared to pursue their interests within the democratic process. They are also shortchanging us as a nation."

—Naomi Wolf, *New Republic*, November 29, 1993

TDC regrets that this issue of Democratic Culture *replicates the phenomenon of male-dominated opinion pieces described by Wolf, and we vow to do better in the future. TDC strongly encourages hearing from a wide variety of voices so that our readers can be informed by these diverse opinions.*

Excellence, Advocacy, and Disciplinarity

Michael Bérubé

I FIND IT difficult to frame an opening statement to the question posed—"Is Advocacy Replacing Excellence?"*—because of the multivalence of the topic: When conservatives or traditionalists charge that education has become politicized, they could be saying that entire disciplines are illegitimate (such as women's studies), or they could be saying that the process of peer review has been corrupted by tenured radicals who hire and promote only those scholars like themselves, or they could be inveighing against curricular innovations which they see as evidence of declining scholarly standards, or they could be referring to affirmative action in faculty hiring or student admissions. Often, they're doing all of these things at once.

But I'm not going to respond to all of these possibilities. I take the charge of "politicization" most seriously when it comes to discussions of peer review, because peer review is a relatively recent phenomenon in the academic professions, and has had a liberating effect on the production of new and innovative research: it is the basis of the "academic revolution" of which Christopher Jencks and David Riesman wrote in their 1968 book. Moreover, it's by means of peer review that intellectual orthodoxies get enforced or challenged in hiring and promotion.

Peer review is our most crucial means of disciplinary self-reproduction, our guarantor of professional credentialism, and we must confront seriously the charges that today's academic radicals have closed the doors of disciplinary access behind them—as John Patrick Diggins, for one, has claimed in his recent book, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*. I think those charges are unsubstantiated, but I don't think they can be dismissed.

I want to focus on curriculum reform and the competing claims of different disciplines to "objective," noncontingent, universal knowledge. My case for curriculum reform is simple: the kinds of curricular changes we've seen over the past twenty years in the humanities constitute a raising—and widening—rather than a lowering of standards. Conservatives have claimed that excellent works or subjects have been abandoned by people like myself, in favor of demographic representation of "marginalized" groups, by the substitution of intellectually and aesthetically inferior materials. But I have yet to see the demonstration that the works of Mina Loy or Charles Chesnutt are aesthetically or intellectually inferior to those of D. H. Lawrence; when it comes to arguing that inferior works have replaced the classics, all our critics have been able to come up with are factually inaccurate descriptions of the Stanford curriculum, liberally spiced with ridicule of Frantz Fanon or Rigoberta Menchú. So in the debates over curricular reform, I tend to get frustrated at having to dignify these claims with a response.

Nevertheless, here's my response. Survey courses in literature—where most curriculum change is happening in my field—have never been repositories of aesthetic excellence to the exclusion of all other considerations. Nor should they be. Survey courses in Renaissance or American literature and culture are rightly supposed to be representative of America or the Renaissance, and I use "representative" here in the broad sense in which such surveys use it: these courses present works that many professional critics consider to be works of high aesthetic merit, but they also present works, like *Everyman*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, or *Women in Love*, which may not be great literature but do give students some idea of the temper of the age, the urge to national self-definition, or that amorphous category known as "influential," "historically important," or "culturally significant" works of art. Most canon revision, particularly the kind in American literature that proceeds by way of the idea of demographic representation, has fallen under this second heading, where it has pointed out that if you want to teach works of great historical interest, you might do as well to assign *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as to assign *The Scarlet Letter*, or, in late medieval literature, to assign *The Book of Margery Kempe* as to assign *Everyman*.

Now, such revisions do not leave everything else about the survey unchanged. When in my own American literature classes I assign James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, I find that the class does have to discuss lynching, which it usually doesn't have to do when I assign *The Turn of the Screw*. Is this political? I think so: I have never yet met a student who knew that in this country, for twenty years preceding the publication of Johnson's book in 1912, we averaged something like 50 to 60 lynchings a year. That's not something I feel comfortable introduc-

**An earlier version of this essay was delivered at a conference on "Is Advocacy Replacing Excellence?" held at the University of Chicago in May, 1993.*

NEWSCLIPS

ship imposed at the NEH: "Why should parents have to pay for soapbox oratory? Fraudulent scholarship. Why should our fine research institutions harbor the bogus scholarship that sometimes goes by the name of feminist theory?" Colgan and other conservatives do not want to debate feminist theory; they want to abolish it.

In one respect, Morrisey, Fruman, and Short are right: New approaches are becoming more common, especially among younger professors. But these critics fail to explain why is it so wrong to teach feminist interpretations in a class where a broad range of theories are considered, perhaps because it would be embarrassing for them to say explicitly that teachers should stop discussing approaches which conservatives dislike. Instead, they malign anyone who mentions a feminist idea in class, even for the sake of argument, as a "politicized" extremist devoted to the destruction of Western civilization. Evidently, such critics will not be satisfied until Marxist and feminist approaches are banned from college classrooms in order to stop "politicized" teaching.

Borking Clinton's Nominees

John K. Wilson

For the past year, an unprecedented number of smears and distorted statements have been made against Clinton nominees. As Bruce Shapiro observes in the *Nation*, "Anyone who wants to sink a Clinton nomination plays the radical card and Clinton folds."

The attacks began even before Clinton was inaugurated, as conservatives stopped consideration of Johnnetta Cole for Secretary of Education by accusing her of associations with radical groups (see the Spring 1993 *Democratic Culture*). With this precedent, conservative groups set out to malign every one of Clinton's nominees who had any hint of a "radical" past.

The height of the witchhunt against Clinton's nominees was reached with Lani Guinier. President Clinton's withdrawal of Guinier's nomination as assistant attorney general was a sad sight to watch, as an experienced civil rights litigator was vilified because of misrepresentations of her academic writings. Clint Bolick's *Wall Street Journal* article which accused Guinier of being a "quota queen" was full of errors, as when he

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NEWSCLIPS

quoted Guinier's summary of another author's views as if they were her own. George Will claimed, "An implication of her writings is that only blacks can properly represent blacks." But Guinier actually wrote, "Authentic representatives need not be black as long as the source of their authority, legitimacy, and power base is the black community. White candidates elected from majority-black constituencies may therefore be considered 'black' representatives."

Her suggestions for increasing minority power by mechanisms such as cumulative voting were depicted as radical and anti-democratic, even though they are widely used and had been supported by the Bush and Reagan Administrations. Her speculative law review articles were interpreted as if they were policies to be enforced on the entire country, even though she explicitly wrote, "I am not articulating a grand moral theory of politics. Nor do I argue that these proposals are statutorily or constitutionally required."

Guinier's ideas are not radical. But even if they were, why should that disqualify her from public service? Public discourse will be endangered unless individuals are given the opportunity to express provocative ideas. As Michael Kinsley put it, "Guinier was doomed for her thinking, not for anything she might have done in the job—a classic p.c. exercise."

While the criticisms of Guinier led to her removal, not all of the attacks on nominees have succeeded. Donna Shalala became Secretary of Health and Human Services despite accusations that she was the "high priestess of political correctness." The conservative journal *Human Events* accused Shalala of having a "leftist agenda" because she criticized Ronald Reagan and refused to denounce "homosexual kissing and hugging."

Laura Tyson was named to head the Council of Economic Advisors in spite of complaints by leading male economists that she was not qualified because she was insufficiently theoretical in her analysis. She has proven to be one of the most effective appointees ever to hold that post. But R. Emmett Tyrrell accuses Tyson (and also Shalala and Labor Secretary Robert Reich) of being "esteemed members of that dreadful American subculture of philistines and charlatans known as the university left." Tyrrell adds that Shalala is

ing my students to, and it's not something they like knowing, and I don't assign the book to make them feel guilty or outraged. I assign it because it is a work of recognized aesthetic merit that is also of great historical interest; it is also as representative of American literature and culture as *Moby Dick* or *The Education of Henry Adams*. However, I must admit this: I occasionally get some students who think the NAACP is as racist an organization as the KKK, and they think so because they have no idea of the history of either organization. Now if these students leave my class with an aesthetic appreciation of Johnson's achievement that also bridges some of the chasms of their ignorance on this score, then I think I have engaged in a pedagogy that is responsible to my profession, to my students, to the history of American literature, and maybe to my country too. And if my students wind up being able to compare Johnson's achievements to, say, those of Robert Frost on a variety of axes, so much the better. The point is that they are asked to consider the relation between literary achievements and the culture they and we inhabit, and I think that any course in which you're asked to do that is in fact intellectually superior to a course in which students are simply introduced to a row of masterpieces, one after the other, when those masterpieces are not culturally contextualized. I confess that I also like assigning lesser-known works, whether they're Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* or Henry Roth's twice-forgotten classic, *Call It Sleep*, because these works still have no *Cliffs Notes*; but that's another matter.

Maybe what I'm doing is just politicizing my discipline. A recent article in the NAS journal, *Academic Questions*, says precisely that: Will Morrisey conducted a study of articles published in *PMLA* from 1930 to 1990, and found that the profession of English has been politicized, because he found a higher number of articles in 1990 than in 1930 in which he could glean the author's political perspective. Now I found this article fascinating, partly because I published an article in *PMLA* in 1990, and partly because Morrisey was unwittingly duplicating some of my own research. What he was trying to do was to take away from us the *tu quoque* argument that says the profession was always already political, by pointing to this manifest apoliticality in our past. But I happen to have done my own headcounting in *PMLA*, and I can tell you that the journal published precisely five articles on African-American literature before 1990. In fact, the *PMLA* used to have a standard for submissions that said a *PMLA* essay takes on "a broad subject or theme," "a major author or work" or "a minor author or work in such a way as to bring insight to a major author, work, genre, or critical method." And, of course, until very recently African-American literature was simply not considered a "major" scholarly subject (the *PMLA* standard now reads "a *PMLA* essay exemplifies the best of its kind, whatever the kind"). Morrisey has inadvertently made my point: the politics that dominated the profession in 1930 or 1940 or 1950 was so pervasive and so unspoken as to go without saying.

But I don't want to leave matters at that, because that's still a pretty predictable rejoinder. And it doesn't address the more intractable problems of adjudicating the claims of excellence and advocacy across disciplines. I'll explain by way of an anecdote. At the "Higher Education in Crisis" conference at the University of Illinois in April 1993, Jeffrey Herf challenged Lisa Duggan's paper on queer theory, saying he didn't see what it had to do with higher education and calling it a "political speech." Now, Jeffrey had a case and he didn't: Lisa's talk had focused on the future of queer politics, not on gay and lesbian studies in higher education, but as she replied to Jeffrey:

> What I was talking about was what queer studies has to do both with the politics of higher education and with a public political discourse, the two of which are really quite related. In order to defend queer studies, to defend our pedagogical practices, we need to defend ourselves broadly in the public arena because that's where the attacks on us in the university are coming from, and they are not separable.

I take this to be an unproblematic answer about the responsibility of intellectuals, as did Jeffrey Herf himself. But what this answer doesn't imagine is an interlocutor hostile to the idea of queer studies on the grounds that no "studies" are legitimate if they depend to such an extent on the construction of their investigators' identities. Few of us in the humanities are prepared to go this distance, perhaps because we cannot imagine interdisciplinary "conflict" with colleagues so antihermeneutic as to disallow the theoretical investigation of human subjectivity and its attendant (contingent) interpretive paradigms. But the very difference between the sciences and the "human sciences" depends in part on this distinction between fields in which the investigation of the investigators is relevant (and, indeed, licensed and authorized by the field itself) and fields in which such self-investigation seems not to constitute authentic, objective "scholarship."

But this distinction cannot so easily be mapped onto the opposition between sciences and human sciences. For there are some disciplines in the

human sciences, as well, where the identity of subjects and investigators is integral to projects (however these are construed), and disciplines where it isn't. To make matters more complicated, there are also disciplines like sociology or psychology or anthropology where you can find traditionalists who believe that it doesn't really matter who does the investigating or what kind of language they use, and "postmodernists" who believe that the positionality and language games of investigators are in fact constitutive of the norms of the field. Finally, there are newer fields like feminist theory or history of science that do make claims about the constitution of other fields, and fields like metallurgy that do not have reciprocal claims on women's studies or history. "Advocacy," therefore, is a radically different matter for different fields, especially in the intersections between fields that do challenge other fields' self-understandings and fields that don't.

To say this is not to say that we should allow for advocacy in English but not in economics. Though there's a sense in which all scholarly work is advocacy (at bottom, all scholarly work contains the implicit claim that the thing under study actually exists and should be studied in such and such a way), I want to point out that the relation between advocacy and simple propositionality is constructed differently in different disciplines, so that biochemistry or neuropharmacology, for instance, may consider themselves value-neutral until they are challenged by feminists who point up gender bias in the testing and marketing of drugs. Likewise, fields such as astrophysics, whose self-understandings tell them that their knowledges are neither historically contingent nor socially constructed, find it difficult to conceive of themselves as anything but objective, empirical sciences. They therefore tend to construe challenges to their self-understandings or disciplinary histories as the work of arrogant interlopers from the humanities trying to remake all knowledge in the image of the humanities, just as they tend to countercharge that they proceed by value-neutral standards of evidence or technical expertise, whereas the people in women's studies aren't really doing scholarship at all.

But this is also why it's hard to say, from any one disciplinary location, which forms of disciplinary orthodoxy are productive and which ones tend to militate against the intellectual desideratum in which we're all equally at risk to challenges from inside and outside the field. You can try to claim that the proliferation of "studies" programs bears witness to the substitution of advocacy for scholarly excellence, or to say that such programs are "political" insofar as they already know their objects, but that claim does not prove, demonstrate, or even argue that the "advocacy" practiced in (say) African-American studies is qualitatively different from, and more intransigent than, the "advocacy" practiced in cell biology.

Although some fields do, more than others, depend on theorizations of human subjectivity in which the theorizer is deeply implicated in the construction of the theorized, still, all fields have orthodoxies that constitute them as fields, and those orthodoxies usually have to bump up against something hard in other fields before they are challenged. Any field in which it becomes impossible to say, "I disagree with the premises of this work, but it's very good work," has closed itself off from the possibility of substantive self-review and internal disciplinary change. But this closing-off is no less likely to happen in the hard sciences than in the humanities; on the contrary, intellectual orthodoxies are often all the more impervious to challenge in the so-called objective fields of knowledge, precisely because those fields claim, when they are challenged, that they're simply describing the given world, not "constructing" it by means of some human interpretive paradigm.

Fields like queer theory, by contrast, which depend heavily and explicitly on their practitioners' construction of their own identities and various histories of sexuality, should in practice and in principle be (though are not always) more likely to recognize legitimate challenges to their interpretive orthodoxies because they know that their orthodoxies are interpretive. They should be more rather than less likely to recognize the intellectual and scholarly excellence of disparate forms of disciplinary advocacy. Our recent history shows that the human sciences have in fact been more readily open to internal and external challenge than twentieth-century astrophysics.

So my answer is no, advocacy is not replacing excellence. What we have instead are curricular reform and canon revision, which can degenerate into mere tokenism but which usually introduce new populations into the curriculum in order to question the relation between academic disciplines and civil society at large. And we find this process writ large in the construction of new fields organized around forms of human identity (race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation), and fields that directly or indirectly challenge the institutional and social processes by which knowledges are produced in supposedly value-neutral fields. Those challenges produce intellectual and political conflict in the academy, as well they should.

Michael Bérubé teaches English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

NEWSCLIPS

"rude and uncouth" and that Reich was "an anti-war activist in the 1960s."

Roberta Achtenberg was confirmed as assistant secretary for fair housing at HUD by a 58 to 31 vote after she was condemned by Jesse Helms because "she's not your garden-variety lesbian. She's a militant activist mean lesbian, working her whole career to advance the homosexual agenda." Even when these malicious attacks and misinformation failed to derail a nomination, they have nevertheless contributed to a climate of fear and intimidation that creates, in Guinier's words, "a new intellectual orthodoxy, in which thoughtful people can no longer debate provocative ideas without denying the country their talents as public servants."

The borking of the Clinton Administration also succeeded in preventing fair treatment of Stanley Katz for the post of National Archivist. Although Katz was a leading contender for the position, the *Wall Street Journal* declared that "the Katz choice would suggest a White House arrogance that borders on the delusional." This is because Katz was "lead prosecutor in the celebrated 1991 campaign against Carol Iannone's nomination to the advisory board of the NEH" and because Katz had "insulted" Senator Moynihan by writing a letter critical of Moynihan. Katz's name quickly disappeared from consideration for National Archivist.

In recent months, the attacks have grown even more absurd and virulent. Tara O'Toole, nominee for Assistant Secretary for Energy, has been attacked because she belongs to the Northeast Feminist Scholars, a study group that had once been called (before O'Toole joined it) the Marxist Feminist Group I. Senator Harlan Mathews charged that O'Toole was "inimical" to American values, while Senator Malcolm Wallop accused her of coming "from America's radical left fringe."

Faced with this abuse, William White, the Deputy Energy Secretary, felt obliged to declare: "This Administration and this department do not embrace any Marxist ideology. According to Dr. O'Toole, she does not, either." As Michael Kinsley wrote, "Why the political beliefs of other members of a three-times-a-year discussion group attended by an Energy Department official are any of the Senate's business is certainly a mystery." But the accusation of "radical" is being effectively used by

Democratic Culture—Page 19

NEWSCLIPS

conservatives to attack Clinton nominees and the Clinton Administration. Dick Armey, the chair of the House Republican Conference, even claimed that Hillary Rodham Clinton "hangs around with a lot of Marxists. All her friends are Marxists."

Thomas Payzant, recently confirmed as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, was attacked by Jesse Helms for having led a "successful effort to kick the [Boy] Scouts out of San Diego's schools." Helms accused Payzant, the superintendent of San Diego schools, of having "abused the public trust to discriminate against the Boy Scouts because they do accept the assumption, as do their parents and the majority of Americans, that homosexuals pose a greater than average threat to young people. The statistics prove it." Helms claimed, "If confirmed, Mr. Payzant can use his office, and the power of Federal funding, to assert to parents all across the country, as he did to parents in San Diego, that having the Boy Scouts organization working with young people should not be tolerated. To that I say, 'horsefeathers'."

Payzant, a former Boy Scout whose son is a Boy Scout, had declared: "Since the Boy Scouts have a national policy which forbids homosexuals from being in leadership positions, it would be a violation of district policy...to allow them to continue with sponsorship of programs during the regular school day." Because of a Board of Education nondiscrimination policy, Payzant concluded (with the unanimous support of the Board of Education) that Boy Scout programs could not be allowed during the school day when there was compulsory attendance, but that the Boy Scouts could continue their afterschool programs. After making other false charges, Helms concluded: "the bottom line is that Mr. Payzant's chief interest is not in educating our children, but rather in imposing upon the Nation's schools his own leftwing extremist social agenda."

Duke law professor Walter Dellinger's nomination to head the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel was delayed by North Carolina Senators Helms and Lauch Faircloth because, according to Helms, Dellinger "assisted in the recruitment of law school deans and professors to oppose the Bork nomination" and, according to Faircloth, he "is going to be a force for

Reading & Its Discontents:

Another Look at Multiculturalism

Raymond June

IT IS IRONIC that the often acrimonious debates which have surrounded multicultural education over the past decade have revealed very little about what actually occurs when students study multicultural literature. On the one hand, we hear the cultural left demanding inclusion, diversity and pluralism in the curriculum while on the other hand, we have the conservatives propounding tradition, coherence and truth inherent in the Western canon. From the groves of academia to the pages of *Newsweek*, the multicultural "canon wars" continue to relegate students to the margins of the very debates which center and evolve around them.

One critic guilty of such negligence is Diane Ravitch, a well-respected historian of education and conservative crusader. In her oft-cited essay, "Multiculturalism: *E Pluribus Plures*," Ravitch makes this dire observation of a multicultural history course that was recently endorsed in some American public high-schools: "Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of school history is its tendency to become Official History, a sanctified version of the Truth taught by the state to *captive audiences* and embedded in beautiful mass-market textbooks as holy writ. When Official History is written by committees responding to political pressures, rather than by scholars synthesizing the best available research, then the errors of the past are replaced by the politically fashionable errors of the present" (my emphasis). Ravitch's facile use of "political pressure" is upstaged only by her view of (high-school) students as "captive audiences"; teachers—especially high-school teachers—may not recognize their students from this characterization, perhaps a result of the tendency among conservative and liberal critics to remove students from controversies and render them abstract entities. If the ostensible battle, then, continues to focus on *why* the curriculum should be diversified rather than *how* students actually interact with and learn from multicultural texts, what other issues might be obscured under the heated multicultural and "PC" rhetoric?

Recently, I conducted a highly focused ethnographic micro-analysis of one Chicago public high-school in part to address this blind-spot and concentrate on actual student reactions to a multicultural textbook. During a two-week period, I observed and interviewed students who used *African-American Literature: Voices in a Tradition* (1992) in three tenth-grade American literature survey courses. A majority of students were African-Americans (there were two Asian-Americans and one white), most of whom were initially excited over this comprehensive, handsomely produced textbook (among its contributors are Arnold Rampersad and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.). Despite the well-documented failures of Chicago's public schools in recent years, this particular school did not suffer from the extreme monetary and scholastic deprivations that inhibit effective learning, making the school a good test case for my study.

At first, students showed a proprietary interest towards *African-American Literature*. Many expressed appreciation that a textbook finally focused on their literary and cultural tradition (what Gates has called a potential form of "self-identification" that provides the conditions for social change and agency). Students lauded *African-American Literature* over the traditional textbook for various reasons: "I didn't know there were so many African-American writers," observed one student; others characterized the textbook as surprisingly "modern" since the literature related to everyday life and concerns; many wished the textbook could have included other literary traditions. Nevertheless, *African-American Literature* elicited uniformly positive responses among students.

Much of their enthusiasm quickly waned, however, when they were required to read selected texts from *African-American Literature*. Many failed to bring it to class or even take it out of their bags. Their rapid attitudinal change coincided with the increasing amount of assigned readings from the textbook as the days progressed. When it became apparent that many students were not reading, the student teacher warned them of a surprise quiz. At one point, she quietly but firmly lectured them about the importance of reading and doing their homework, clearly frustrated that class discussion was stymied by her students' failure to read. And because the usual class period of fifty minutes was often truncated by ten minutes due to tardy students or administrative reasons, valuable class time was often lost. In short, many students demonstrated apathy—even antipathy—towards reading, which naturally prevented *African-American Literature* from achieving its full impact.

The students' own comments on reading reinforced my in-class observations. One revealing statement came from this articulate and thoughtful student:

> I particularly don't like to read. I would not just pick up a book and read it....I don't think that

I could ever pick up a book and just read....what it is is that if I pick up a letter from one of my relatives from Arizona say, if that letter's ten pages long, I put it back down (laughs). Anything in print I usually don't read, unless the subtitle catches my eye like very much so. It has to be so interesting that it's like that I can't help but read the title....if I read the first couple of sentences that it'll keep on linking, it might link me to the rest. It depends on how it is.

I think the other students are interested in the textbook....but like I said, I cannot stand reading. If there was another way for me to get that information from the textbook, I'll use that other way.

What I find most striking here is the student's deeply entrenched dislike towards reading itself, whether it is *African-American Literature* or a ten-page letter. Although this student, in a later conversation, appreciated and applauded the *idea* of *African-American Literature* for its unique focus on her ethnic and cultural heritage, the full impact of the textbook could not be gauged adequately because of her extreme reluctance to read. In other words, her appreciation for *African-American Literature* did not make reading more inviting or "natural." The student's closing remark suggests that she could be a prime candidate for *Cliffs Notes*; these guides, as Gerald Graff has pointed out elsewhere, at least provide "a context of discussion" for new readers to engage with a text. And it appears as if this context was found wanting in the student's experience.

Many of her classmates also expressed similar, though less passionate, sentiments. One student told me, "I won't just...take a book and read it. If we have a story or assignment to read that's interesting, I might read it. But usually I read other things. I like to read comic books or the sports section of the paper." This student shows how rarely he is exposed to a cultural conversation which stimulates him to read and discuss issues pertaining to the text. As the student himself admits, picking up a book and reading it is an unnatural activity; somehow it has to interest him.

Not all approaches were unsuccessful in stimulating students to read. For August Wilson's "The Piano Player," now taught by the regular teacher, students were told to read aloud in class. She asked for volunteers to role play and was greeted enthusiastically. During the four days I spent observing students interacting with the play, I was struck by the difference in the classroom ethos. Instead of excusing themselves from reading, (most) students were thoroughly engrossed with "The Piano Player" and were willing to answer the teacher's periodic questions. Though reading the play aloud could have bored them just as easily as reading alone, the students' dramatic role-playing suggested otherwise. Research has shown how African-Americans bring with them unique critical responses—signification—to African-American literary texts which reflect their oral culture. While this is an important point, we should not forget that this activity allowed students to enter a social community. As the role-playing exercise demonstrated in part, students need somehow to be initiated into a critical community of readers, or a "discourse community," in order for them to respond fruitfully to a text.

Reading, then, does not take place in a vacuum. Books do not just teach themselves because nobody "just" reads (as Allan Bloom and other conservatives have misleadingly asserted). The quarrels over multiculturalism remain irrelevant if students are not initiated into a reading community. The goals of secondary-school multicultural education cannot be met adequately if educators do not respond to students' resistance to reading, which is surely one of the biggest factors inhibiting effective learning. Their resistance is further reinforced by such cultural factors as America's anti-intellectualism. This is not to say that all students were affected monolithically (there were many discrete instances of students who read on their own and consistently did their homework); rather, this resistance appeared to affect students among a wide segment of the student population. I do not want to suggest that this problem separates more "fundamental" skills from multicultural concerns. Any such division is clearly artificial and obviates the importance and necessity of multicultural education. Instead, our inquiry needs to be broadened so that other issues may be illuminated and foregrounded in the raucous culture wars.

If, therefore, the "disappearance of reading" among literature students is an issue that should concern us, it is not because literary theory has replaced the Great Books, but because many (high-school) students apparently refuse to read *at all*. By extension, literary theory on the college level should not be seen as usurping but as supplementing literature, serving as a frame of reference for students often confused or frustrated with literary texts read in isolation (a common experience among many college students). I suspect that this problem exists in many secondary schools and colleges—public or private—at least, more than we care to admit. It is the more pressing crisis we face in American secondary and higher education.

Raymond June is a graduate student in Education at the University of Chicago.

NEWSCLIPS

the same liberal status quo that prevails in Congress—more spending, more liberal theories that say school prayer is wrong and flag burning is okay." Helms, with the support of Senate Republicans, led a one-day filibuster against Dellinger's nomination.

Janet Napolitano, nominated by President Clinton to be U.S. Attorney for Arizona, has been attacked by David Brock and some Senate Republicans because she was the lawyer who talked with Susan Hoerchner during a break in questioning about the sexual harassment of Anita Hill. Although their conversation cannot be disclosed under attorney-client privilege, as Anthony Lewis writes in the *New York Times*, "right-wing Republicans are demanding that she violate legal ethics and disclose it."

Morton Halperin had his nomination to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Democracy and Peacekeeping returned to President Clinton by the Senate after being attacked by conservatives for his past views and associations. The *New York Times* reported, "Mr. Halperin's opponents seem to have no quarrel with the nominee's views on contemporary issues. Instead, they contend that Mr. Halperin's past writings on such cold-war topics as arms control, covert operations and the Vietnam War make him unfit to work at the Pentagon." Senator Strom Thurmond declared, "He has a long history of extreme views on national security which put him well outside the acceptable mainstream of defense policy, even among Democrats."

Yet Senator David Boren noted, "We found that [Halperin] brought to the issues a determination to solve difficult problems in a nonideological manner that reflected commitments not only to the defense of individual liberty but also the requirements of national security." Halperin's "extreme" statements include this sentence from a 1976 book he co-wrote: "Using secret intelligence agents to defend a constitutional republic is akin to the ancient medical practice of employing leeches to take blood from feverish patients." But in McCarthy-esque attacks on "radicals," innocuous statements from 17-year-old books are taken as proof of incompetence to serve as a public official.

As Senator John Danforth wrote in the *Washington Post*, "The carnage of presidential nominations now litters the landscape of Washington." Danforth

NEWSCLIPS

added, "If there is to be some minimum standard of decency we accord presidential nominees, it will arise from an expression of disgust by the American people for what we are doing to nominees who previously have lived exemplary lives."

Some conservatives might assert that what is being done to the Clinton nominees is no different from what happened to Robert Bork, Clarence Thomas, and Carol Iannone. But there is a difference. The opposition to Bork rested on the fact that he would hold a powerful lifetime position where his views would be the law of the land, whereas the Clinton nominees would serve under the authority of the President and Congress. Thomas was investigated because of highly believable charges of serious misconduct. Iannone was opposed by some for her conservative views, but also for her lack of scholarly qualifications and because of the ideological stacking of the nonpartisan NEH Council. None of these three nominees faced the kind of guilt by association attacks and gross misrepresentations of their views which a large number of the Clinton nominees have experienced.

No one doubts that nominees for public office should be questioned, criticized, and held accountable for their actions. But this criticism must be accurate and relevant, and in the case of most Clinton nominees it has been neither. The use of guilt by association and the distortion of a nominee's views diminishes public debate by creating witchhunts against anyone with the slightest hint of "radicalism."

Supreme Hypocrisy

John K. Wilson

On May 22nd, Chief Justice William Rehnquist gave the commencement address at George Mason University. Rehnquist declared that students should leave college feeling that their "horizons have been expanding" by the "marketplace of ideas." But, Rehnquist noted ominously, some universities promote "an orthodoxy or sort of party line from which one departs at one's peril," rather than educating their students without indoctrination. Rehnquist added, "Ideas with which we disagree—so long as they remain ideas and not conduct which interferes with the rights of others—should be confronted with argument

What's Left?

Michael Sprinker

READING MY FRIEND and colleague Tim Brennan's article in *Democratic Culture* (Spring 1993) provoked me to some reflection on what it means to be "on the left" and in the academy. One of Brennan's points is that what passes for radicalism in colleges and universities often enough betrays principles and programs that an older generation would have considered fundamental to any radical politics worthy of the name. Moreover, Brennan believes that this newer brand of academic radicalism is rather less embattled than it may sometimes feel when the likes of Roger Kimball take out after it. If not precisely hegemonic, radicalism of the cultural avant-gardist sort is now very powerful, with a profile well outstripping that of its conservative opponents among the professoriate.

I have no reason to quarrel with Brennan's general assessment, but I wish to maintain the utility of discriminating between two quite different senses of the terms "radical" and "left" as these are applied to academic intellectuals.

On the one hand, cultural avant-gardists have waged a genuine struggle to break down older conceptions of curriculum and research. Their achievement to date must certainly, on balance, be judged progressive. No one who supports TDC should wish a return to a curriculum featuring primarily courses like "The Age of Dryden" or "The Novel as a Literary Form," or to articles entitled "The Organic Unity of Shakespeare's Sonnets." Insofar as literary study now finds its center of gravity in post-structuralism, new historicism, deconstruction and so on, the discipline has demonstrably benefitted. On this level, the cultural avant-garde has much reason to congratulate itself—if no grounds for complacency.

On the other hand, Brennan is quite right to draw our attention to another way of thinking about the terms "left" and "radical" that would lead us to judge the contemporary scene rather more harshly. To be a left or radical intellectual entails more than changing the substance of one's courses and the direction of one's research. It requires a serious commitment to substantive social change and progressive social goals. Brennan is correct: disciplinary or methodological radicalism is, at the end of the day, a pretty thin veneer covering more basic—and less honorable—commitments to intellectual and material privilege. One knows too many colleagues who can teach courses that deconstruct "the great tradition," but who don't support strikes by graduate students or clerical workers. Radicalism in the authentically political sense of the term exacts costs because the stakes are a good bit higher than those in attaining professional dominance.

Let me presume for a moment that the majority of *Democratic Culture*'s readers are at least broadly sympathetic to the left in this second sense. How ought we, as leftists, act towards our colleagues who remain radical only in the first sense of the term? In my view, we need to ally ourselves with them inside departments and throughout our institutions, aiding them in their promotion and tenure battles, in their efforts to hire more women and people of color, and in their attempts to change curricula. We also need to cultivate a certain tolerance for their writing, recognizing those aspects of it that are, in a narrow disciplinary sense, progressive or even radical. At the same time, I do think we need to push them further than they are at present willing to go, demanding that they live up to the principles of progressive gender, race, and class politics to which their work not infrequently pays lip service. And we might press them to extend their radicalism beyond the walls of academe, and support movements and organizations which work daily to mitigate the plight of the poor and the powerless in a capitalist society whose vicious inequities have increased exponentially during the very period when university intellectuals have transformed the face of many disciplines.

One could say that such has been the left's perennial task in societies enjoying a minimum of democratic rights: to forge alliances with liberal elements against the massed forces of capital and its political and ideological lackeys. Some of my "co-religionists" on the Marxist left will doubtless dub this strategy "reformist." I fully confess my betrayal of strict revolutionary principles, while insisting that in the current conjuncture, popular frontism probably constitutes the outer horizon of progressive politics in the United States. Socialism, which I take to be synonymous with radical politics, is unlikely to arrive punctually at the call of left intellectuals. But when capitalist crisis does finally occur, it will be of no little consequence to the prospects of revolution if the left has been swelled in numbers by cadres of cultural radicals who have discovered that their disciplinary identity overlaps significantly with the political program of the left.

Michael Sprinker teaches English at SUNY-Stony Brook.

Teaching and Research

Ted Underwood

I WAS PLEASED, on the whole, with the most recent issue of *Democratic Culture*. I realize that TDC faces a difficult job in attempting to provide a common front for liberal and left-liberal academics, and I think you're doing the job well. But I do want to register concern over a matter of emphasis.

In the Newsclips, when the issue of research/teaching balance came up, it was almost always in order to identify teaching as a potential smokescreen for a conservative agenda. To be fair to John Wilson, he didn't leave it at that. He was careful to point out that there's a valid issue involved, and he identified some badly needed reforms—like making clear communication a criterion for evaluating research, and fostering a climate where professors might feel more comfortable visiting each other's classes.

But I remain concerned, because I think there's a real danger of unnecessary polarization on this issue. It's true that many conservatives have been happy to leap on the teaching bandwagon because it offers them an acceptable sort of leverage. Perhaps, as Wilson suggests, "many conservatives want to limit research in the humanities in order to prevent the 'politicization' of the university." But if so, those are shortsighted conservatives, because there's no reason why teaching should be any less politically effective than research, or why a renewed commitment to teaching should limit the intellectual or political rigor of research, though it might reduce the number of articles published.

Likewise, there's no reason for the academic left to look for ulterior motives every time someone suggests shifting the research/teaching balance a little toward teaching. The truth is that we all have an interest in exposing students to new ideas, sharpening their dialectical faculties, and encouraging them to think for themselves. "Teaching," as such, need not belong to any one constituency.

I'm afraid there is a real danger that our mainstream professional organizations may go the way of the NEA. In part because we're feeling besieged, in part out of self-interest and inertia, it's possible that academics themselves could become the greatest obstacles to educational reform.

It seems to me impossible to deny that there has long been a problem in the balance between research and teaching in the academy. The imbalance is there, and it doesn't just affect large research universities. I went to a liberal arts college not very long ago, and while I was there I saw the three professors who I felt were most committed to teaching and to fostering dialogue in the community, all denied tenure while others were promoted. In *The Informal Curriculum*, talking about her experience as a new professor, Susan Wolfson writes, "The chief, and quite stunning, revelation for me and for others in many places was how little dedicated teaching counts in the big picture." Of course there are many people, and many institutional communities, who put a great deal of effort into countering this, but they're swimming upstream, because on the whole graduate education socializes us to be researchers, and our institutions of dialogue focus on research.

Our traditional way of responding to this is to argue, as John Wilson paraphrases it, that "research and teaching needn't be framed as opposites. On the contrary, good research and good teaching can go together, and usually do." This is both true and disingenuous. While it's quite true that research can and should fuel teaching, that doesn't in the least show that the two activities aren't also in conflict. There are only twenty-four hours in a professor's day. Hours spent doing research are not spent teaching. To me, that looks like a conflict, or at least a potential problem of balance.

In the long run I think it's both more honest, and a better strategy, for us to acknowledge the necessity of reform, because the best defense we have against outside criticism of the university on this issue is to steal its thunder. A movement that starts from inside the academy is much more likely to preserve respect for research and for academic freedom—and much more likely to work—than one imposed by administrators.

The problem isn't a lack of good will or of talent, but the way our institutions of dialogue and promotion are set up. With some notable exceptions (especially writing-across-the-curriculum programs), they simply don't encourage communication, collegiality, or innovation on our primary enterprise, teaching. Surely we could change this. I can't believe there are any obstacles (of logistics, or of tact) that would prove intractable, if we took this problem as seriously as we take everything else. Many people on TDC's steering committee have written extensively and thoughtfully about this question, and it should be possible to organize a panel discussion or special issue of *Democratic Culture* featuring them.

Ted Underwood is a graduate student in English at Cornell University.

NEWSCLIPS

and persuasion, not suppression."

Noble words, indeed.

But Rehnquist's opinions on the Supreme Court have shown much less devotion to the free exchange of ideas. In the Flag Burning case, Rehnquist wrote: "Surely one of the high purposes of a democratic society is to legislate against conduct that is regarded as evil and profoundly offensive to the majority of people—whether it be murder, embezzlement, pollution, or flag burning." He added: "flag burning is the equivalent of an inarticulate grunt or roar that, it seems fair to say, is most likely to be indulged in not to express any particular idea, but to antagonize others." Rehnquist rejected the idea that flag burning could be a political statement: "The flag is not simply another 'idea' or 'point of view' competing for recognition in the marketplace of ideas. Millions and millions of Americans regard it with an almost mystical reverence regardless of what sort of social, political, or philosophical beliefs they may have."(*Texas v. Johnson*, 1989)

In the "gag rule" case preventing doctors in public health clinics from talking about abortion, Rehnquist explicitly declared the right of the government to censor anyone it sponsors: "The Government can, without violating the Constitution, selectively fund a program to encourage certain activities it believes to be in the public interest, without at the same time funding an alternative program which attempts to deal with the problem in another way. In doing so, the Government has not discriminated on the basis of viewpoint; it has merely chosen to fund one activity to the exclusion of the other."(*Rust v. Sullivan*, 1991) By this reasoning, any government-funded entity, from schools to libraries to the National Endowment for the Arts, could censor unpopular views. Nor has Rehnquist objected in the past to the regulation of student behavior at public universities: "The government as employer or school administrator may impose upon employees and students reasonable regulations that would be impermissible if imposed by the government upon all citizens." (*Healy v. James*, 1972)

Homilies about the greatness of free speech are common, but willingness to follow these principles consistently is all too rare.

Democratic Culture—Page 23

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

JOIN TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE WITH THIS FORM

The continuing growth and success of TDC depends on your involvement and your contributions. We ask all current TDC members *to renew their memberships* by returning this form to cover calendar year 1994. We also encourage non-members who have received this newsletter to join us. Please mail this membership form to: Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston IL 60204.

__Yes, I want to become a member of TDC __Yes, I want to renew my membership in TDC

Enclosed is my 1994 contribution of: ___$50 ___$25 ___$5 (students)

Name_____

Department_____ School or Affiliation_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____ Home Address (if preferred)_____

Phone Numbers: Business_____ FAX_____ Home_____ E-mail_____

democratic Culture

Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405
Evanston, IL 60204

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 7706

The University *Is* Popular Culture *by Gerald Graff, p. 28;* **Letters on Critical Pedagogy**, *pp. 31-34; and* **The Sexual Correctness Controversy**

Newsletter of
Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405 • Evanston, IL 60204

(312) 743-3662 • FAX: (312) 743-4548
e-mail: jkw3@amber.uchicago.edu

democratic Culture

Volume 3
Number 1
Spring 1994

Whatever happened to political correctness the p.c. forces political **Politically Correct:** the proper and approved statement p.c. offense. or action in a given situation *Politically Incorrect* The P.C. dispute correctness. make fun of p.c. the debate over political correctness and multiculturalism **Politically Incorrect** It is now p.c. to The phenomenon of political correctness the new sexual correctness PC P.C. p.c. p.c. p.c. **Has political correctness gone too far?** the p.c. ethos politically correct husband. 'Geronimo' anger some professors 'political correctness' Professors batting "political correctness" on their campuses Political correctness Politically correct A Penn professor claims Goya's luscious "Naked Maja," a print of which hangs in her classroom, hurts her ability to teach: it sexually harasses her. chief tenet of political correctness Politically correct Police P.C. vs. English. the political correctness test ut of control political correctness The advent of the Political Correctness Police goes on apace. P.C. AND MULTICULTURALISM Silber's remarks on 'political correctness' nutritionally correct PC JACKIE MASON: POLITICALLY INCORRECT political correctness Politically incorrect Cosmetically Correct proud of it

INSIDE • INSIDE • INSIDE • INSIDE • INSIDE

The Politically Correct Newspaper
by Wayne Booth 2

Uncovering the Right on Campus
by Dalya Massachi and Rich Cowan 2

PC Administrators at Vassar: Power and Ideology
by Richard Wolff 4

The Future of Lesbian and Gay Studies
by Christopher Lane 7

Censoring Sex at the University of Iowa
by Jean Fallow 10

The Legend of Camille Paglia
essays by Curtis Perry and Ana Cox 12

John Silber: The Man Behind the Mouth
by Bob Dahlgren 17

The Real Story of Goya's *Naked Maja*
by Nancy Stumhofer 18

Re-Thinking the University
by David Simpson 23

Race and Free Speech at Iowa State
by Jacqueline Smetak 26

Popularizing the Humanities
by Gerald Graff 28

Yes, You Are Reactionaries: A Letter
by Donald Morton and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh 31

Buddha's Critical Pedagogy: A Letter to the G's
by Amitava Kumar 34

Leftist Indoctrination? An Exchange
by Elizabeth Powers and Michael Schwalbe 35

PLUS: News on **Diversity & Accreditation**, **Sexual Correctness**, **Saul Bellow's Zulus**, **Selling PC**, **Misusing the SAT**, and **more.**
by John K. Wilson

TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Co-Coordinators:
Gerald Graff
Gregory Jay

Provisional Steering Committee:
Steve Fuller
Jane Gallop
Henry Louis Gates
Barbara Gold
Dominick LaCapra
Amy Lang
Donald Lazere
Ellen Messer-Davidow
Patricia Ramsey
David Shumway
James Slevin
Judith Stacey
Dan Tompkins
Mark Tushnet
Richard Yarborough

Newsletter Editor:
John K. Wilson

Newsletter Layout:
Reid Huntsinger

HELP TDC!

In order to continue producing **Democratic Culture** and coordinating the other activities of TDC, we need renewals from our current members and new memberships from those receiving **Democratic Culture** for the first time. Use the form on page 3 or the back page to join TDC and keep receiving this newsletter. And encourage your friends to become members. Without your support, we won't be able to continue our work.

A Politically Correct Letter to the Newspaper

Wayne Booth

I have just completed a statistical study showing that the expressions "politically correct," "politically incorrect" and "PC" are appearing in newspapers these days more often than "and," "but," "Michael Jordan," and "Tonya Harding." Are the computers used by reporters and columnists programmed to deliver the expressions at the touch of a key, whenever their minds go blank?

I wonder whether your newspaper might hire some careful reporter to trace the innumerable, puzzling, and often contradictory meanings that the catch-phrases are used to obscure. I admit that about once a month I find the PC ploy used to attack something that actually deserves attack: self-righteous, smug or repressive (and thus morally inconsistent) impositions of "tolerance" or "civility." But more often I find the expressions a mere coverup for positions authors prefer not to express openly.

May I suggest that you reprogram your computers? Instead of supplying the PC expressions when thought fails, program them to ring bells and flash the following whenever any of these expressions is typed in: "PHRASE OUTWORN AND MEANINGLESS! CANNOT CONTINUE UNTIL YOU CHOOSE FROM THE FOLLOWING THE SYNONYM CLOSEST TO THE VIRTUE YOU WANT TO MOCK:

(1) decency; (2) legality; (3) moral or ethical standards; (4) justice, fairness, equality of opportunity; (5) tact, courtesy, concern about hurting people's feelings unnecessarily; (6) generosity; (7) kindness; (8) courage in defending the underdog; (9) anti-bigotry; (10) anti-racism; (11) anti-anti-Semitism; (12) anti-fascism; (13) anti-sexism; (14) refusal to kneel to mammon; (15) sympathetic support for the jobless, the homeless, the impoverished, or the abused; (16) preservation of an environment in which human life might survive; (17) openness to the possibility that certain popular right-wing dogmas just might be erroneous.

"PLACE YOUR CURSOR ON THE NUMBER OF THE VIRTUE YOU ARE OPPOSED TO, PRESS THE 'ENTER' KEY AND THEN GIVE YOUR REASONS OR START OVER."

No doubt some of your better writers will occasionally find, as they think through the list of virtues, that their target is indeed the vice mentioned in the second paragraph. They can then search for attack language that will convey, unlike "politically correct," some meaning other than, "I'm both politically neutral and on the right side—in both senses of the word 'right.'"

Wayne Booth is professor emeritus of English at the University of Chicago. His letter appeared in the February 14, 1994 Chicago Tribune.

Political Correctness in the Media

Articles referring to "political correctness" on the NEXIS database:

1985	**0**	**1990**	**66**
1986	**7**	**1991**	**1553**
1987	**7**	**1992**	**2672**
1988	**7**	**1993**	**4643**
1989	**15**	**1994***	**1427**

*(through 3/31)

Uncovering the Right on Campus

Rich Cowan and Dalya Massachi

Exaggerated stories of "political correctness" on college campuses run rampant today. Massively funded private organizations have attempted to discredit and eliminate student and faculty involvement in any "political" issue. Significant academic inclusion of historically disenfranchised groups, environmental responsibility, cooperative methods for resolving conflicts, and non-Western ideas are precisely the kinds of issues which are under fire as being "PC." Some of the key fallacies we have noticed about the PC-scare are:

• **"PC" Liberalism is totalitarianism**. This is classic Orwellian doublespeak. Using gender-neutral pronouns, for example, cannot possibly be compared to the fascism or Nazism which made mass murder, racism, and the abolition of dissent official state dogma.

• **Campuses are "hotbeds of the Left."** The millions of corporate and military dollars poured into universities for research contracts and endowed professorships hardly indicate an abundance of "leftist" activity. As long as this "bottom line" is covered, universities can afford to make a few changes to include more socially-relevant topics and perspectives. Besides, why is it surprising if institutions touting the "liberal arts" look beyond the status quo?

• **Political Correctness represents a "crisis in education."** The real crisis is budget-slashing. Programs and scholarships to make higher education relevant and accessible to people of color and lower income students are becoming a thing of the past. By insisting that changes in the universities have made them "PC," the Right tries to reinforce the economic stratification and institutionalized racism of academia.

• **Right-wing campus newspapers tend to be more "rational."** Claiming to have cornered the market on "rationality," these papers often blatantly manipulate shady facts and out-of-context quotes. Some of the papers are used as personal slam-sheets and self-promotion tools for the careers of writers seeking a job with a New Right think-tank after college.

• **Freedom of speech automatically protects hate-mongers.** Legally speaking, freedom of speech is not an absolute right. The issues are complex when people use demeaning or harassing language against others. Exposure to "non-traditional" viewpoints, which may cause people to question the thought and speech of themselves and others, is not the equivalent of brainwashing or censorship.

• **With the end of the Cold War, the Right has demobilized.** Energy directed by conservative groups has been redeployed domestically, with the universities as the primary target. So far the Right has not developed a mass following on campus, but there are signs they may be starting to succeed.

A final fallacy is that progressives shouldn't "waste their time" by paying attention to the Right Wing. The Right's actions affect the response of the campus constituency to our organizing. Knowledge of their strategies and their origin can be enormously helpful. Exposing the funding and true agenda of Right-wing groups helps us get beyond the coached tactics and glossy brochures extolling "freedom," and reveals the Right's true undemocratic intentions.

Dalya Massachi and Rich Cowan are staff members of the University Conversion Project. This essay is excerpted from the 52-page UCP "Guide to Uncovering the Right on Campus," with articles on the PC scare, conservative foundations, and organizing resistance, which is available from the **University Conversion Project, Box 748, Cambridge, MA 02142** *(617-354-9363). Annual membership, which includes the UCP Guide and upcoming issues of the UCP quarterly* **Study War No More**, *is $25 ($20 student, $10 low-income).*

Join TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

(The following is excerpted from the original statement of purpose of Teachers for a Democratic Culture.)

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES in the United States have lately begun to serve the majority of Americans better than ever before. Whereas a few short years ago, institutions of higher education were exclusive citadels often closed to women, minorities and the disadvantaged, today efforts are being made to give a far richer diversity of Americans access to a college education. Reforms in the content of the curriculum have also begun to make our classrooms more representative of our nation's diverse peoples and beliefs and to provide a more truthful account of our history and cultural heritage. Much remains to be done, but we can be proud of the progress of democratization in higher education.

A vociferous band of critics has arisen, however, who decry these changes and seek to reverse them. These critics have painted an alarming picture of the state of contemporary education as a catastrophic collapse. This picture rests on a number of false claims: that the classics of Western civilization are being eliminated from the curriculum in order to make race, gender or political affiliation the sole measure of a text's or subject's worthiness to be taught; that teachers across the land are being silenced and politically intimidated; that the very concepts of reason, truth and artistic standards are being subverted in favor of a crude ideological agenda.

It is our view that recent curricular reforms influenced by multiculturalism and feminism have greatly enriched education rather than corrupted it. It is our view as well that the controversies that have been provoked over admissions and hiring practices, the social functions of teaching and scholarship, and the status of such concepts as objectivity and ideology are signs of educational health, not decline.

Contrary to media reports, it is the National Association of Scholars, their corporate foundation supporters and like-minded writers in the press who are endangering education with a campaign of harassment and misrepresentation. Largely ignorant of the academic work they attack (often not even claiming to have read it), these critics make no distinction between extremists among their opposition and those who are raising legitimate questions about the relations of culture and society. And though these critics loudly invoke the values of rational debate and open discussion, they present the current debate over education not as a legitimate conflict in which reasonable disagreement is possible but as a simple choice between civilization and barbarism.

Yet because the mainstream media have reported misinformed opinions as if they were established facts, the picture the public has received of recent academic developments has come almost entirely from the most strident detractors of these developments....

It is time for those who believe in the values of democratic education and reasoned dialogue to join together in an organization that can fight such powerful forms of intolerance and answer mischievous misrepresentations. We support the right of scholars and teachers to raise questions about the relations of culture, scholarship and education to politics—not in order to shut down debate on such issues but to open it. It is such a debate that is prevented by discussion-stopping slogans like "political correctness."

What does the notion of a "democratic culture" mean and how does it relate to education? In our view, a democratic culture is one in which criteria of value in art are not permanently fixed by tradition and authority but are subject to constant revision. It is a culture in which terms such as "canon," "literature," "tradition," "artistic value," "common culture" and even "truth" are seen as disputed rather than given. This means not that standards for judging art and scholarship must be discarded but that such standards should evolve out of democratic processes in which they can be thoughtfully challenged.

We understand the problems in any organization claiming to speak for a very diverse, heterogeneous group of teachers who may sharply disagree on many issues, including that of the politics of culture. What we envision is a coalition of very different individuals and groups, bound together by the belief that recent attacks on new forms of scholarship and teaching must be answered in a spirit of principled discussion. We think the very formation of such a group will be an important step in gaining influence over the public representations of us and our work.

It will also be a way to take responsibility for the task of clarifying our ideas and practices to the wider public—something, it must be admitted, that we have not done as well as we should. We need an organization that can not only refute malicious distortions but also educate the interested public about matters that still to often remain shrouded in mystery—new literary theories and movements such as deconstructionism, feminism, multiculturalism and the new historicism, and their actual effects on classroom practice.

We therefore propose the formation of Teachers for a Democratic Culture.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

JOIN TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE WITH THIS FORM

The continuing growth and success of TDC depends your involvement and your contributions. We ask all current TDC members *who have not renewed their membership* to return this form to cover calendar year 1994. We also encourage non-members who have received this newsletter to join us. Please mail this membership form to: **Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston IL 60204.**

__Yes, I want to become a member of TDC __Yes, I want to renew my membership in TDC

Enclosed is my 1994 contribution of: ___$50 ___$25 ___$5 (students)

Name_____

Department_____School or Affiliation_____

City_____State_____Zip_____Home Address (if preferred)_____

Phone Numbers: Business_____FAX_____Home_____ E-mail_____

NEWSCLIPS

The Nobel Prize for Abuse

One of the most disturbing trends in recent years has been the vicious attacks on African-American writers by conservatives who believe that their honors and awards are based on racial preferences rather than literary merit. Attacks on the abilities of African-American writers have been common since Carol Iannone declared that Alice Walker's National Book Award for *The Color Purple* "seemed less a recognition of literary achievement than some official act of reparation."

The *New Criterion* recently claimed that Toni Morrison received the Nobel Prize in Literature because she is black, female, and a "subscriber to academic political correctness." The *New Criterion* also attacked Morrison for "the poor quality" of her writing, which it said is "left-wing sermonizing and sentimentality" and "saturated with divisive racial animus."

There will always be disagreements about whether an author deserves to receive the Nobel Prize. But it is strange that when these disagreements concern an African-American woman, conservatives always assume that the prize must have been given for racial reasons, and not because anyone genuinely believes she is a good writer. A literary difference of opinion is used to attack affirmative action.

Heather MacDonald wrote in a *Wall Street Journal* column, "to claim, as Ms. Morrison does, that race is the primary referent of all American culture is a reckless exaggeration." Indeed, this statement is an exaggeration, but the source of the recklessness is MacDonald's imagination, not Morrison's writing. Morrison writes, for example, that examining the Africanist presence will "supplement our reading of *Huckleberry Finn*, expand it"—not dominate it to the point of making race the exclusive focus of every interpretation. Simply because Morrison wants to end the silence about race in most discussions of American literature, it does not mean that she wants race to become the sole basis of literary criticism.

The only politics involved here was MacDonald's fear that awarding a Nobel Prize to someone "working busily to dismantle the ideal of color-blindness...bodes poorly for racial har-

Repression in the Guise of Sensitivity:

The Vassar Example

Richard D. Wolff

THIS TIME IT was Vassar College—small, rich, elite, and "liberal"—that made academic history of the worst sort. In three weeks last November, it drove a junior with an impeccable record (and liberal-radical inclinations) to leave and never return. The Vassar administration exercised virtually absolute power to force this student, falsely accused, to defend himself with three days notice at a trial whose outcome might lead to his expulsion. In that trial, Vassar denied the student even minimal rights of due process or fairness or the presumption of innocence accorded elsewhere in society. Finally, when the trial nonetheless failed to find the student guilty of anything, a Vassar administrator declared to the student that he was *not* found innocent, that if and when new or additional charges were brought, he would be tried again. This entire wielding of unrestricted, dictatorial power was justified as an exercise in "sensitivity" to the "problem of homophobia."

I was no dispassionate observer of these events; the student is my son, Max Fraad-Wolff. I am a TDC member who teaches economics at a major state university. Max's mother, Harriet Fraad, is a psychotherapist in private practice. All of us have been long-time, active supporters of gay rights alongside the rights of other marginalized groups. In 1991, Max chose Vassar over the University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins, and several other universities. He did so because he liked Vassar's stated commitments to multiculturalism, liberal values, interdisciplinary studies, and maximum freedom for students to find their own areas of study. As a radical of sorts, he felt—and was encouraged by Vassar officials to believe—that it was the right place for him.

His first and second years at Vassar went well. While maintaining a consistent 3.7 average, he constructed his own major around economics and geography with a special focus on southeast Asia. He found a supportive group of friends, was well liked, and experienced no difficulties with administrators or teachers. Quite the contrary—he accepted a research assistantship offered by a faculty member and was nominated by the school administration for a responsible post overseeing the distribution of student activity funds.

Then, on October 29, 1993, the Vassar administration turned on Max without warning. He was told that a Vassar student had charged him (together with another student) with making a homophobic phone call which was recorded on the accusing student's answering machine. Max was informed that he would face an official Vassar "hearing" the following Wednesday, November 3, where he would have to defend himself. If found guilty, he faced penalties including possible expulsion from the school.

Max called us for help but also for an explanation of how this could happen. He never made a homophobic phone call to anyone; he hardly knew the accusing student. It was midterms week and he had studying to do. How in the world could he mount a defense in so few days? Yet his entire academic career was at stake, not to mention his emotional equilibrium.

Appeals to the Vassar administrators that this was a monstrous error fell on wholly uninterested ears. Before the hearing, Max, his mother, and I—having consulted lawyers—explained to Vassar's Dean of Student Life, Colton Johnson, and also to his two subordinates most involved in the case, Pamela Neimeth and Faith Nichols, that a simple mechanism was available to resolve the issue. A machine is used in courtrooms across the country whenever there is need to identify a voice on a tape recording (human recognition of recorded voices is notoriously unreliable). Many firms conduct these "voice print tests." We suggested that this was an appropriate step to take before subjecting anyone to a life-disrupting hearing about an issue that is highly charged on the Vassar campus. Max expressed his eagerness to take such a test to demonstrate his innocence. All the Vassar officials refused.

Instead, the Vassar officials chose to rely on students' opinions about whose voices they recognized on the answering machine tape. Prior to charging Max, Vassar had arranged for the tape to be played in student dormitories and dining halls. Students were urged to come forward to report the names of other students whose taped voices they thought they recognized. One official told us that 40 names of Vassar students had been gathered in this bizarre manner.

Max was extremely upset, but despite the intense time pressure, he found student and faculty witnesses who testified that he was neither homophobic nor had made any phone call to the accusing student on any occasion. But as he prepared, it quickly became clear that the Vassar administration was no more interested in a re-

motely fair hearing than it was in using an objective voice test. Max was to be forced through a "show trial" orchestrated by Vassar to demonstrate publicly and punitively how "sensitive" it was to homophobia.

Max was denied the right to have a lawyer at his hearing; he was denied the right to have his parents present. When he requested to tape the proceedings—to enable him to prepare an appeal in the event he was found guilty—the Vassar official in charge of the hearing, Faith Nichols, refused. When he requested a copy of the tape that Nichols said she would make of the proceedings, she refused.

Max's "hearing" began on November 3, 1993 at 6 p.m., and lasted until 1:30 the next morning. Max, the accused, had to act as his own lawyer, keeping his own notes. He finally persuaded Nichols to allow him to have a student friend sit by his side to take notes of the events since he could have no tape of them. However, at the conclusion of this "hearing," Nichols confiscated all of Max's notes. She also confiscated all the notes of his student friend. Despite repeated requests, these notes were never returned.

During the hearing, Pamela Neimeth, another Vassar official, testified in place of two students witnesses who, she stated, were "afraid" to confront Max. In any normal courtroom proceeding, this would have been considered hearsay and disallowed. Neimeth had earlier assured Max and us in her office that she was a purely investigative official—whose job was only to determine if homophobic harassment had occurred—and that she had "absolutely no role whatsoever in determining anyone's guilt or innocence."

The flavor of these star chamber proceedings may best be conveyed by an event that occurred during the hearing. As Max rushed about organizing his defense, he was approached by another Vassar student whom he did not know. She told Max that she was moved by his plight because she, too, had been accused by the same student of having made or arranged the same homophobic telephone call. That student had accused her before he had accused Max.

However, when her parents got lawyers to threaten suit over these accusations, the accuser had written her a letter of apology, admitting that his accusation was false. Max obtained a copy of this signed letter. Max felt that it was crucial evidence since it showed (1) that his accuser was a self-admitted false accuser, and (2) that the Vassar administration knew that he had falsely accused others, and yet nonetheless refused to make a voice print test before proceeding on his next accusation. Max asked to read the letter to the hearing panel and submit it as evidence. Once again, the presiding Vassar official, Faith Nichols, refused to allow the letter to be read or submitted as evidence even though the letter's author was present at the hearing as was the letter's recipient, who was scheduled to testify for Max as one of his witnesses; both could readily have verified the letter and the incident of false accusation.

The list of Vassar officials' acts of disrespect for even the most minimal concepts of due process is too long to belabor here. Official "sensitivity" to the certainly important issue of homophobia seemed to excuse, in Vassar's official mind, a gross insensitivity to the presumption of innocence and simple fairness.

Max might still have stayed at Vassar had the hearing found him not guilty, and apologized for the damage to his studies and reputation. However, although the hearing's verdict had been promised for "the next day," Max heard nothing official until Faith Nichols called him into her office at 10 p.m. the following Monday night—when college offices are normally closed—to tell him that despite his having been found not guilty, further "hearings" might be imposed on him at any time, if his accuser brought forth new information.

Max had had enough. At this point, he decided to leave and complete his college education elsewhere. He could not remain and be held, in effect, a hostage by an administration that had revealed itself willing to sacrifice him to its own self-promotion as "sensitive to homophobia." He had been forced out of Vassar and withdrew formally on November 15.

The producers of CBS's *48 Hours*, hearing about the case, approached Max and Vassar shortly after the hearing. Max agreed to talk to them, but every request CBS made to interview Vassar officials was refused. At one point, a CBS camera crew was asked to leave the campus. Eventually CBS itself offered, at CBS's expense, to arrange a voice print test. Max gladly agreed. Vassar once again refused. Vassar apparently decided that stonewalling CBS was less damaging than permitting a test which would establish that they had victimized a totally innocent student. CBS made Max's case the lead segment of the *48 Hours* program broadcast on January 5, 1994.

Why did all this happen? Why would Vassar pillory one student in a show-trial, when the accusation could have been early verified or falsified by means of a readily available test? Part of the answer is that the details of truth, falsity, due process, fairness, and presumption of innocence were of no weight to Vassar officials when compared to the value of demonstrating "sensitivity to" and "swift vigilance

NEWSCLIPS

mony." Apparently MacDonald believes Nobel prizes should not be awarded for literary merit, but according to one's political adherence to the ideal of color-blindness.

Nor is Morrison the only target of these smears. Robert Brustein wrote an essay in *Partisan Review* (reprinted as the cover story for the January 16th *Chicago Tribune Magazine*) asserting that the Clinton administration was "commissioning an inaugural poem by a writer of modest talents, obviously chosen because she is an African-American woman, and otherwise behaving less like an appointments agency examining qualifications than a casting agency looking for types ('Get me a black female lawyer for the part of assistant attorney general!')."

When Brustein claims that a fine poet like Maya Angelou was chosen solely because of her race, he is not merely being insensitive—he is lying. Angelou is probably America's most popular poet, a status reflected by the huge crowds which attend her college lectures and her best-selling books. Brustein's attack on Lani Guinier is equally baffling, since even her fiercest opponents did not challenge her high qualifications for the post.

I doubt if any racial animus motivates these individuals. Rather, this is a racial prejudice—an assumption, before any consideration of the facts, that any achievement by an African-American is undeserved and motivated purely by affirmative action. But worst of all is the fact that these conservatives have used their own ignorant prejudices to attack affirmative action. They often claim that racial preferences are bad because they cause people to doubt the abilities of African-Americans and other minorities—and then they try to prove it by doubting the achievements of all African-Americans.

Conservatives would do a great deal for racial equality if they would consider the possibility that the African-Americans who receive awards might actually deserve them, and that the people who read the writings of African-Americans do so not out of group solidarity or white guilt, but because they actually enjoy reading them and feel they are worthy of study. Until then, we will have more vicious attacks by conservatives who make African-American writers the scapegoats for their resentment at affirmative action.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NEWSCLIPS

Accreditation Nazis

The recent attacks on the Western Association of Schools and Colleges' (WASC) diversity standard are almost comical in their paranoia. The *Wall Street Journal* invokes the specter of "diversity shock troops" who will soon be "looking for grievances among women or minority groups," and the California Association of Scholars produced a lengthy report which concludes, "With the capture of the accrediting agencies by a politically correct orthodoxy, a powerful lever has become available to enforce that orthodoxy—the threatened loss of accreditation, and even the loss of eligibility for federal funding." Richard Ferrier, who led Aquinas College's heroic fight against WASC, declares: "Just because the Nazis didn't take Switzerland didn't mean they didn't intend to take all of Europe as soon as they could." Yet highly traditional Aquinas College, which refused to arrange a meeting with the WASC team to address grievances by minority students, was nevertheless re-accredited.

The reaction to WASC's policy is all the more strange because it explicitly declares that it will seek diversity by "the route of education, evaluation and constructive advice rather than the route of sanctions" and allow each institution to pursue "these goals as it sees fit." As WASC chair Donald Gerth notes: "The document clearly states that accreditation will not be denied any college that is thoughtfully considering the matter of diversity in the context of its own institutional mission and values."

The problem with the accreditation process is that its main function—to certify minimal standards for colleges—makes it largely irrelevant for the vast majority of colleges which clearly meet these basic requirements. For this reason, accreditation agencies have generally expanded their mission to become external critics of colleges who can examine the strengths and weaknesses of these institutions and suggest reforms. Gerhard Casper, president of Stanford, attacks WASC for daring to make "broad pronouncements on educational policy that go beyond the accreditation standards themselves." But Stephen Weiner, an executive director of WASC, notes that "The fundamental issue is whether the accrediting associations will continue against" homophobia. This was something demanded by the most organized and vociferous groups currently active on the Vassar campus, namely those concerned with gay rights.

Another part of the answer lies in a naked power grab. The homophobic phone call offered Vassar an ideological pretense for a demonstration of absolute, unrestrained administrative power. Vassar administrators could, in two weeks, transform a student's life, subject him to enormous pressure, and drive him out of college.

In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, students won some powers from administrators, including curricular initiatives and political freedoms. What has been happening for the past few years is the academic parallel of the Reagan-Bush political backlash. College administrations want to reverse the flow of power away from students. But to do so explicitly is not possible. It would rouse students and risk further loss of administrative authority.

Instead, administrators disguise power grabs as commitments to good causes. Here, the administrative power grab crosses the path of "political correctness." The right-wing attack on efforts to diversify curricula, faculties and students as "authoritarian PC campaigns" is handed invaluable ammunition by college administrations like Vassar. Conservatives, who can and do mobilize those appalled by the assault on campus civil liberties and freedoms, are able to link that assault with multiculturalism *in general*. Vassar's linkage of multiculturalism and oppressive disregard for civil liberties and fairness holds great dangers for all these democratic values, inside as well as beyond the college.

After interviewing many members of the Vassar community, I doubt that Vassar administrators think or care much about "political correctness." They do care about accumulating more power, prestige, and prerogatives. Covering that accumulation with verbiage about the latest "correct" thing to do—in Max's case, combating homophobia—is just good public relations *on campus* for them.

Vassar is clearly determined to be maximally "gay-friendly." Indeed, Max knew that when he decided to attend Vassar; it was a positive factor in his mind and in ours. However, none of us foresaw or imagined that the Vassar administration would pander to part of its gay community in such illegitimate and repressive ways.

Had anyone even suggested then the possibility of what has now transpired, we would have rejected the idea. Such behavior, we would have reasoned, threatens the loss of sympathies and creates a backlash that would be at least as dangerous to gays as to others.

Still another factor is today's political climate. Activism around broad, inclusive issues like social democracy and class transformation is at a low ebb. More narrowly focused kinds of politics emerge. Indeed, the struggle to include the plight and rights of oppressed sub-cultures on the agenda for social change has an importance I recognize—as does Max. Here, Max's experience at Vassar crosses the debates over the positive and negative aspects of "identity politics," and the struggles over whether gay politics will go in progressive or regressive directions. Max's experience shows that the struggle for gay inclusion can become exclusive and oppressive when allied to or managed by a group with a very different agenda. Vassar is an institution deeply committed to the status quo. Its interests are to subsume the campus movement for gay rights to its traditional, elitist commitments to hierarchical authority and the maintenance of most other existing social and economic structures.

Letting administrations like Vassar's get away with gross abuses of minimal democratic rights—as in Max's case—threatens democratic values everywhere. As I sift through reactions to this case and the CBS coverage, I am becoming aware of how widespread the problem may be across campuses in the country. Caught between the attacks from the right on "PC" and attacks from fundamentally conservative college administrations, are campuses now becoming bastions of reaction? Is there a set of rightward shifts underway that democrats everywhere need to address analytically and politically, both in theory and in practice? Perhaps the readers of *Democratic Culture* have answers to offer and could begin a debate from which all of us would benefit.

Richard Wolff teaches economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

TDC is helping support the 4th Annual **Convention of the Sisters of Color International**, to be held May 6-8 at the University of Wisconsin—LaCrosse. Conference organizer Sondra O'Neale of the Women's Studies program at LaCrosse states that "in addition to artists and scholars, we will have prominent Women of Color who have achieved success in the fields of politics and higher education." Panel and workshop topics include: Cross-Racial/Ethnic Relations Among Women of Color, The Intersections Between Academia and Racial/Ethnic Communities, and Immigrant vs. Ethnic Perspectives. For registration information contact Kay Robinson, Office of Continuing Education, 227 Main Hall, University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse, WI 54601 (608–785–6510).

Controversies of the Sexual

Christopher Lane

IF LESBIAN AND Gay Studies is to fully live up to its name, it cannot simply examine the lives, difficulties, and identities of lesbians and gay men: it may be the closest we have yet come to an impossible field of study. I write this in full knowledge of a dramatic and exciting explosion of interest in the subject and a burgeoning field of journals and publications from colleges and universities across the country. Many humanities departments are now anxious, as never before, to add openly gay and lesbian professors to their ranks (although many are not); some administrations are almost falling over each other in an effort to be the first to change domestic partnership policies.

Because of these changes, it may be useful to consider the role of Lesbian and Gay Studies in the academy, and particularly to ask whether the desire by many institutions to hire lesbians and gay men is quite the same as their desire to see the introduction of a new field of study. It may be one thing to work alongside lesbians and gay men in a department; it may be quite another to have the subject of homosexuality constantly recur in this pedagogical setting.

"What is the true object of Lesbian and Gay Studies?" is a question which I must address, since I have recently been appointed coordinator of a new Certificate Program in Lesbian and Gay Studies. Having "passed" several committee hurdles at the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, whose principal concern was to ensure our program's academic "rigor," the other proposers and I were keen to emphasize our certainty about its various components. The list seemed quite obvious: literary and cultural studies; history, political science, and sociology; psychology and health sciences. But these procedural questions left unasked and unanswered precisely what we consider to be the aim of Lesbian and Gay Studies. What, indeed, would constitute its academic "success"? Now that the pressure of justifying ourselves to the administration is over, we face another challenge—not so much from hostile students and faculty (though that is surely never far away), but from our own students, who are anxious to learn more about the conceptual basis of the program, and who are looking for more than a validation of their own sexual identity.

Despite its insistence that eros informs all cultures, institutions, and gender structures, Lesbian and Gay Studies has tended—perhaps more than Women's Studies—to bear the brunt of an accusation that it sexualizes unnecessary or "inappropriate" aspects of the curriculum. Disrupting the academy's fantasy that it can control the desires and antagonisms that circulate within it, Lesbian and Gay Studies has attracted some of the controversy and notoriety that accompanies any public discussion of sexuality. Add to this caution and suspicion a palpable embarrassment about the taboo elements of homosexuality, and the entire field of Lesbian and Gay Studies looks as through it is sitting on a time-bomb.

Strange as it may seem, I think there may be a grain of truth to this institutional anxiety. For if Lesbian and Gay Studies takes upon itself the task of counseling students through the various conflicts and vicissitudes of their identity, it will inevitably come aground on the terrain of the personal. We may need to ask whether Lesbian and Gay Studies can interpret the personal without personalizing its field of study. How, for example, does a discussion of heterosexuality avoid the anger or rejection of heterosexuals in the room (always assuming that they want to be there)? In the light of this question, it seems expedient to ask another—namely, how does a discipline that actively recognizes the conflicts of its students avoid a shift from teaching to therapy? Inevitably, this raises a question about transference, and the role that gay and lesbian professors either assume or are asked to perform in the classroom and institution, because Lesbian and Gay Studies consciously engages with public and private fantasies—about writers, governments, policies, and professors.

Ironically, it seems that the attempt by institutions to hire open gay and lesbian professors as role models has an inevitable propensity for failure. It may be that the very insistence or assumption that lesbians and gay men automatically identify with each other leads to a bewildered set of antagonisms and personality conflicts that invariably hinge on the idea of betrayal and disappointment. "What have you done for us?" or, more painfully, "you are not what we wanted," are some of the statements and demands that accompany this assumption.

The problem of difference and overidentification is not the sole property of Lesbian and Gay Studies. It can and does accompany any discipline that is founded on identity politics. But Lesbian and Gay Studies has a way of intensifying this problem by insisting that the psychical, in addition to the personal, is a necessary field of interpretation. The very subtlety of its pedagogical boundaries may demonstrate how quickly "interpretation" can become "investigation." This shift need not be intended or openly articulated; the very search for a sexual truth

NEWSCLIPS

simply to ensure minimum standards" or will also "ensure real educational quality."

If the diversity standard is used to force colleges into doing whatever WASC demands, then it will be wrong. But there is no evidence that this will ever happen. Instead, WASC is doing exactly what it should do—helping colleges examine their policies. And until the diversity shock troops start shutting down colleges, the threat of political correctness posed by WASC will be the imaginary one it has always been.

May I Look At Your Policy?

A recent article in *Newsweek* (March 7) depicts Antioch College as a sexual paradise with nude dancing and coed shower orgies in the dorms. It's a far cry from the "Sexual Correctness" *Newsweek*, which six months earlier declared ominously, "The much-publicized rules governing sexual intimacy at Antioch College seem to stultify relations between men and women on the cusp of adulthood."

Antioch's sexual offense policy attracted so much attention last year because it declares: "Verbal consent should be obtained with each new level of physical and/or sexual contact or conduct in any given interaction, regardless of who initiates it." The Antioch policy was often ridiculed because it included rather excessive provisions like, "Asking 'Do you want to have sex with me?' is not enough. The request for consent must be specific to each act."

However, the Antioch policy applied only to someone who wanted to initiate sexual contact, and mutually and simultaneously initiated conduct was not prohibited in any way. The policy also placed responsibility on both partners: "The person with whom sexual contact/conduct is initiated is responsible to express verbally and/or physically her/his willingness or lack of willingness when reasonably possible." But these provisions were never mentioned in the media, which was determined to fit Antioch's policy into the "sexual correctness" hype regardless of what the truth was.

The *New York Times* accused Antioch of "legislating kisses" and claimed, "Worrying about worst-case scenarios is appropriate since, as one disgruntled student put it: 'This is a real policy. I can

NEWSCLIPS

get kicked out over this.'" But the "worst-case" scenarios were irrational fears about a policy that, if properly administered, posed no threat to anyone. Antioch Dean Marian Jensen says that students are abiding by the policy "to the extent that they feel comfortable," which hardly sounds like "Sexual Correctness" police prowling around campus. Despite its flaws, the Antioch sexual offense policy stated a simple and unobjectionable rule for proper conduct: it's wrong to touch someone in a sexual way against their will.

However, the Antioch policy was a public relations disaster for the movement against date rape. Antioch's policy was effectively ridiculed on *Saturday Night Live*, which featured a game show skit, "Is it date rape?" with Shannon Doherty playing Ariel, an Antioch major in Victimization Studies. The contestants had various incidents acted out for them and concluded whether they were date rape or not. Ariel said that everything was date rape, without waiting to hear what happened. (In one case where a man asked "Would you mind having sexual intercourse?" and the woman replied "No," Ariel declared that it was date rape because "No always means no.") The official Antioch idea of romance was played out by a man asking a woman, "May I compliment you on your halter top?" and, having received consent to do so, moving on to "May I kiss you?" and "May I touch your buttocks?"

Antioch's policy has opened itself up to ridicule and hurt efforts to stop acquaintance rape. But conservatives have seized upon these rules and exaggerated their importance as part of the backlash against the anti-rape movement. However silly Antioch's policy may seem, students are not being suspended for failing to get explicit permission before they kiss. The *Newsweek* article points out that the handful of complaints under the policy have been mediated by Dean Jensen. No one has appeared before a hearing board, let alone punished.

The real "sexual correctness" ideology which reigns on college campuses is not Puritanical feminism, but the belief that sexual harassment and acquaintance rape are minor, isolated problems deserving little attention. This is the "sexual correctness" which stops women from reporting the very real incidents of harassment and rape on

may elicit this fantasy as an unconscious response.

It is possible that this response is formally introduced to Lesbian and Gay Studies by a kind of investigative criticism that considers its own success to be intimately tied to the disclosure of a character's sexual identity. Many critics tend to ask "Is there a homosexual in this text?" in order to verify, first, whether the book is worth teaching, and second, whether it will have something obvious and relevant to say about same-sex desire. It is not surprising that this kind of investigation places so much emphasis on certainty that it soon becomes intolerant of doubt and indeterminacy. Leaping to the conclusion that "there is a homosexual in this text!" critics turn their declaration into an answer to all preceding textual enigmas and narrative obscurity. Add a little biography, simmer gently for ten minutes, and—voila!—the homosexual text is served!

This pursuit of homosexual "secrets" is obviously not the sole province of Lesbian and Gay Studies, though the fact that it flourishes in this discipline may indicate some of its conceptual and ideological underpinning. It is obviously a small (and therefore interesting) step from the enigma of a text to that of its writer, but it may be harder than we think to stop a corresponding shift from text to teacher or writer to class.

In the light of all our own disputes and difficulties, it should not surprise us that Lesbian and Gay Studies has so many fierce opponents. Some of this opposition is clearly connected to Lesbian and Gay Studies' challenge to the literary canon and academic curriculum; the remainder seems to derive from questions about its "rigor" and legitimacy. Advocates of Lesbian and Gay Studies are thus asked to define its goals, but it is not always possible or desirable to formulate them so schematically. A recent demand by the Board of Regents at the University of Wisconsin asking all departments that offer majors to declare their criteria for undergraduate study left most professors in the humanities understandably bewildered and angry. How you summarize a student's ability to theorize literary meaning? How, indeed, do you evaluate the kind of critical acuity undergraduates must reach before they can be awarded a degree?

Place these kinds of institutional demands on Lesbian and Gay Studies and the scenario has all the ingredients of a farce: demonstrate how successfully your students have come to identify heterosexism; evaluate their grasp of the common sites of homophobia. We need to have a clearer recognition of the procedural aims and practices of Lesbian and Gay Studies, and that entails examining the complex and occasionally difficult relation between gay teachers and students inside and outside the classroom, as well as the relations between gay students and straight students, lesbians and gay men, and—perhaps most fundamentally—between everyone's fantasy relation to Gay and Lesbian Studies and the unconscious of this discipline.

If the unconscious of a discipline by definition cannot be spoken, it is still possible to read it in its effects. Certainly, I am not advocating a kind of public confession in which everyone articulates their fantasy of what Lesbian and Gay Studies can and should be, but it may be necessary to acknowledge that various demands and expectations are being placed on Lesbian and Gay Studies that it cannot hope to fulfill. One of these is surely that it can resolve a level of indecision or discomfort with sexual identity and that the student should see the class and teacher as an appropriate vehicle for this undertaking. The other is simply the common—but often unchallenged—assumption that Lesbian and Gay Studies is reducible to the thoughts and lifestyle of its teachers. Maintaining the impossibility of either demand is one of the first and fundamental responsibilities of anyone teaching in this field. Refusing to be a role-model would also seem to represent the best chance for creating a relationship of trust and support between lesbian or gay faculty and their students.

There may be something important to learn here from the pedagogic practice of Women's Studies. The justifiable feminist argument that "the personal is political" has often paradoxically created a form of criticism in which the political is nothing but the personal. (This, of course, is not the entirety of feminist argument.) Although this argument is presented to the student as an attempt to engage their perspective on the political, it often stymies discussion beyond the most basic and fundamental constituents of identity—namely gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. It is equally possible for Lesbian and Gay Studies to flounder on the same set of concerns, and to find itself unable to shift discussion beyond the

AIDS in the Classroom

The things that happen in my classroom aren't going to be just about what the most theoretically illuminating way to talk about AIDS and representation is, but also what can I do to make sure that everyone in my class has talked about safer sex, and everyone I teach, to the degree that I have any control over it at all, has at least heard a bunch of language that begins with the premise of the value of queer lives. And the validity of any decisions they can make to take care of their lives and preserve them. We also just talk practically about safer sex, whenever we can do it. I know I should make it happen even more.

—**Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick**, interviewed in *Minnesota Review* (1994).

personal stake of its students. Yet it may be worth asking, in this regard, how successfully "sexuality" can become a part of "identity." Is there not something fundamentally oppositional about these two terms that Lesbian and Gay Studies must interpret and not repress?

This argument asks us to relinquish some of the attraction—and banality—of critical and pedagogical certainty. In the place of stable procedures and diagnostic confidence about texts and teaching, we would find a level of unreliability that is disconcerting for a discipline already beset with external questions about its validity and conceptual rigor. In other words, we would have to consider the importance and prevalence of doubt that informs, surrounds, and sometimes interrogates, Lesbian and Gay Studies. By insisting that sexuality lies beyond the security of stable reference and knowledge, we cannot produce a discipline that draws on, or endeavors to promote, conditions of certainty. Paradoxically, we must also engage in daily battle with the contrary insistence by our culture that sexuality is something we can know, master, and consciously manipulate.

This difficult strategy is often unattractive to lesbian and gay students and teachers because it is interpreted as an attack on everyone's identity—e.g., I know what I am, I know who we are, and, in the words of the title from a recent book, there is Proust, Cole Porter, and Guys Like Me. But if psychoanalysis and critical theory have taught us anything, it is to recognize that every identity "leans" upon absence, enigma, and doubt. We may not be able to build strategies and communities of unfaltering affirmation when we consider that these identities engage with the constant shift and reformulation of sexuality from external and interior demands.

If this disjuncture between the "inside" and the "outside" of sexual identity is unavoidable, the discrepancy it creates between uncertainty and affirmation in Lesbian and Gay Studies is also quite intractable. In particular, it rebounds in unexpected and often ungratifying ways for any lesbian and gay critic who wants to consider the troubled interface between the writing, signification, and (for want of a better word) the "inhabiting" of homosexuality. However, it may be impossible to operate within Lesbian and Gay Studies from a position of interpretive confidence when the real subject of study has already eluded the discussion.

For these reasons, we may need to rethink popular accounts of subjectivity that extend only to the "construction" of desire, personality, or identity. For they assume that the subject either acts according to its "choice," or that it is conversely acted upon by forces that take this choice away. Instead, we may need to consider the relevance of identification at this point, especially the argument by psychoanalysis that one's "choice" is already compromised by internal constraints, psychical history, and an ineluctable resistance to speech and self-knowledge.

Retaining this paradox about identity, speech, and certainty may illustrate part of what is at stake in the academic controversies over the sexual. For although this paradox tends to engender discomfort and anxiety, the crucial issue here is that it divests both homosexuality and heterosexuality of the ability to represent themselves as stable and separate phenomena. This paradox also avoids the assumption that homosexuality is organized solely by external impositions of discourse and mandates of power.

None of these ideas gives us a hard and fast policy on how to create and sustain Lesbian and Gay Studies. Instead, I offer these thoughts as an indication of the challenge that awaits this field of study. As Lesbian and Gay Studies progresses ever onward to the heady heights of academic respectability, we must somehow find a way to emphasize that the discipline is not reducible to its teachers, that the personal is not always personalizable (or personable), and that there will always be something about sexuality that engenders discomfort and eludes interpretation.

Christopher Lane teaches English and Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee. This essay is excerpted from an article which will appear in the spring 1995 GLQ.

The Purposes of Lesbian and Gay Studies

We might ask ourselves, where is a forum for working-class, nonacademized lesbians and gays? Are we interested in creating such a forum? How are universities complicit with a near-feudal economic system that divides and conquers rural communities? What is the relationship between urban-defined university elitism and rural poverty? Are queer academics from metropolitan cultures interested in including rural lesbians and gays (the ones who don't contort themselves to fit urban molds) in their "groundbreaking" work? Does a lesbian and gay studies agenda need to address such questions? I believe that it must. Judging from the sincere desire for systemic transformation expressed in the work of many lesbian and gay scholars, it seems to me that a lesbian and gay program should exist not only to replicate itself in the closed system of academia but to open a crack to the outside world that will allow less privileged people to contribute to and define the "queeries" brought to the fore in this vibrant area of studious politics.

—**Julie Wilson**, "The Pink Tower: Thoughts on Lesbian and Gay Studies," *Sojourner*, January 1994.

NEWSCLIPS

campus.

As with *Newsweek*'s infamous "Thought Police" cover story on political correctness, its "Sexual Correctness" story depicts an intolerant leftist orthodoxy: "Like political correctness on campuses, there's pitifully little room for debate or diverse points of view." But like political correctness, "sexual correctness" is a media invention with no basis in reality, a soundbite which discourages debate by the false claim that a new feminist Puritan orthodoxy has seized control of college campuses.

Denying Rape

For the past few years, Berkeley sociologist Neil Gilbert has been waging war against Mary Koss' survey of college women which found that 27% had been victims of rape or attempted rape. Gilbert has repeatedly accused Koss of biased, "advocacy research" which is "a serious exaggeration of the problem." Now, in an article on "fraud" in the March/April 1994 issue of *Society*, Gilbert even accuses Koss of "a misrepresentation of findings to the public."

Neil Gilbert has three objections to Koss' study. First, he points out that 73% of the women who Koss identified as victims of rape did not say they had been raped. Overall, 27% said it was "rape," 14% called a "crime, but not rape," 49% thought it was a "miscommunication," and 11% felt "they don't feel victimized." Gilbert concludes that since many of the women didn't say they were raped, it couldn't have been rape. Gilbert's second argument is that the women surveyed could not have been raped because 42% had sex again with the men who raped them.

But Gilbert fails to deal with Koss' data. In addition to the 27.1% who had been victims of rape or attempted rape, Koss also found that 11.2% suffered sexual coercion, and 14.5% unwanted sexual contact as the highest levels of sexual victimization. Since those surveyed had the opportunity to describe what happened to them as merely unwanted sexual conduct, it would be strange for them to select a more extreme category for something which was not rape. Gilbert ignores another part of Koss' data, which shows that 84% of the women who were raped tried to reason with the attacker and 70% put up some form of physical resistance. If it was a "miscommunication" rather than rape, why did women react

as they did in "real" rapes?

Gilbert's sole criticism of the survey itself comes when he contends, "two of the five items Koss used to define incidents of rape and attempted rape were the vaguely worded questions: 'Have you had a man attempt sexual intercourse when you didn't want to by giving you alcohol or drugs, but intercourse did not occur? Have you had sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because a man gave you alcohol or drugs?'" Gilbert may be right to contend that some incidents reported in response to this question might not legally be rape (although they are still interesting survey questions). But even if we accept Gilbert's challenge to the "alcohol or drugs" question, it only reduces the proportion of women who had been raped from 15.3% to about 12%—not the 44% decline which Gilbert asserts.

It is bad enough that Gilbert's so-called "refutation" of the Koss study has been widely reported without criticism in the media. Now Gilbert has gone beyond mere disagreement with Koss to maliciously and falsely accuse her of committing fraud. Gilbert's "evidence" for these charges is simply ludicrous. He complains that Koss wrote in a *Los Angeles Daily Journal* article about the rape victims, "One quarter thought it was rape, one quarter thought it was some kind of crime but did not believe it qualified as rape, one quarter thought it was sexual abuse but did not think it qualified as a crime, and one quarter did not feel victimized." While Koss' generalizations exaggerate the number who thought it was a crime but not rape (14%), she lowers the number who saw it as rape (27%) and her greatest exaggeration is the number who did not feel victimized (11%), which contradicts her thesis. It is absurd to call this a "breathtaking disregard for the facts" in order to "make them more compatible with the author's conclusion."

Like any survey on a controversial topic, Koss' study deserves criticism and debate. But Gilbert's attempt to depict his opponent as an academic fraud is simply dishonest and unworthy of a public debate about this issue.

Academic Sexuality

The careful reader of this issue of *Democratic Culture* may note what appears to be an inconsistency among

Unusual and Unexpected Censorship:

The University of Iowa's Classroom Materials Policy

Jean Fallow

STUDENTS, FACULTY AND staff at the University of Iowa have been engaged since last September in a battle with the State Board of Regents and the university administration over a classroom materials policy which imposes a warning requirement for "unusual or unexpected" course content. At their February meeting in Iowa City, the Regents found their lunch and afternoon session disrupted by an angry crowd of 100 people chanting "Freedom to teach, freedom to learn" and "Repeal the policy now!" Regents President Marvin Berenstein was so shaken by the peaceful but spirited protest that he suggested he would be willing to have a "dialogue" about re-arming campus security officers—but not about reconsidering the policy.

The UI policy is a response to three incidents over a two-year period where a handful of students complained about viewing materials dealing with homosexuality. The first occurred in September 1991, when *Taxi zum Klo*, an acclaimed film about the cruising experiences of a gay teacher, was screened for several German language courses. Although the showing was not mandatory and a posted flier warned, "Don't come near this film if the world of homosexuality upsets you in any way," several students complained and the next morning's *Des Moines Register* ran a banner headline reading "U of I language students irate over graphic gay film." Before the controversy died down there was even talk of firing the professors involved, but then-Regents President Marvin Pomerantz decided against it only because "it would be difficult to make the dismissals stick" and there might be lawsuits.

The next incident was in February 1993, when Teaching Assistant Megan O'Connell showed a video by Graduate Fellow Franklin Evans to an Art Colloquium class. The video included approximately 15 seconds of electronically-altered footage of oral sex between two men. Public controversy erupted when undergraduate Melissa Chase complained to her mother, who in turn called the UI administration and the media. The established complaint procedures, which stipulate that complaints should first be taken to the instructor, were not observed in this or in any of the other incidents. O'Connell was subsequently required to apologize to her students and to attend a Board of Regents meeting, where she was not allowed to speak in her own defense.

The third incident occurred when a teaching assistant in the American Studies department showed *Paris is Burning* to an American Family Values class. The film, an award-winning documentary about transvestites and the cultural practice of "voguing," contains no graphic sex scenes at all. However, when a student objected, Dean Judith Aikin of the College of Liberal Arts responded by officially reprimanding the instructor. Although the TA, who to this day prefers to remain anonymous, fought back and ultimately succeeded in having a letter rescinding the reprimand placed in his file, the official rebuke had a chilling effect, alerting other instructors that dealing with similar material in class could bring the long arm of the institution down on their heads. This episode clearly demonstrates that it was not representations of sexual acts in general that the administration sought to quash, but rather of non-heterosexual orientation in particular. No public controversy has arisen over similarly explicit class content of a heterosexual nature.

After these three incidents, where complaints were made by a total of five students, the State Board of Regents called on the Faculty Senates of the three state universities—the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa—to implement policies regulating the presentation of sexually explicit materials in class. The Senates of ISU and UNI complied, and their versions were accepted by the Regents in October. However, at the University of Iowa students mobilized quickly against the policy, arguing that it sanctioned homophobia and violated academic freedom. They successfully picketed and addressed the September 28 Faculty Senate meeting, which voted to table the motion indefinitely.

In retribution, the Regents imposed their own policy on the UI in October, stipulating that it would remain in place until and unless the Faculty Senate passed an acceptable alternative version. All seven people who addressed the Regents about their policy—including four students, the President of the University, the President of the Faculty Senate, and the UI General Legal Counsel—spoke strongly against it. A proposed compromise policy was approved by the Faculty Senate in November, but was rejected by the Regents at their December meeting.

Tired of the ongoing controversy, President Hunter Rawlings drafted a substitute text over winter break, while most students were conve-

niently off campus. Instead of submitting it to a democratic vote of the Faculty Senate, he consulted individually with "about 20" senators before presenting it to the Regents, who approved it at their January meeting. Although touted as a compromise, Rawlings' policy goes even further than the Regents' October version. It requires advance warning not only for materials with sexual content, but also for those deemed "unusual or unexpected"—without specifying by whom or according to what criteria. Given the context in which the policy arose, it is clear that the words "unusual or unexpected" are merely the new code words for anything dealing with homosexuality. However, the policy's domain is now much broader than that: it could be used to discipline instructors for presenting *any* ideas or classroom materials deemed undesirable by the Administration or the Board of Regents. Rawlings' policy constitutes a powerful addition to the arsenal of those who are mounting, under the guise of the "anti-political correctness" movement, a backlash against the discussion of nontraditional lifestyles, ethnic minorities and dissenting political viewpoints in the classroom.

The ad hoc student opposition evolved into the Campaign for Academic Freedom (CAF), a united group of students, staff, faculty, and community members. Throughout fall semester CAF organized rallies, literature tables, a petition drive which garnered 1400 signatures, and a well-attended "Canned Film Festival" where the films that had elicited reprimands were screened and discussed. CAF adopted the slogan "There's no policy like no policy" and argued that no restrictions on academic freedom were acceptable.

The group is not alone in suggesting that the warning requirement chills academic freedom. Robert O'Neil of the American Association of University Professors wrote to Regents President Berenstein in a November 3, 1993 letter, "Our concern is not only with academic freedom threats posed by banning what may be said or taught in the classroom, but also from rules that constrain or inhibit, or which single out a special class of teaching material." Similarly, Cryss Farley of the Iowa Civil Liberties Union wrote to Berenstein on December 1, "Pre-censorship is the most dangerous of all curtailments of freedom of expression. The imposition by the Regents of a policy singling out one category of instructional material for particularized rulemaking imposes a dangerous form of discrimination against selected ideas and discourse in the academic setting. While the ICLU recognizes that the policy imposed by the Board of Regents does not prohibit the use of explicit materials in the classroom, it is only too clear, given the context in which the policy mandate has arisen, that the intent is to suppress one form of expression in the classroom—a *de facto* prior restraint. Moreover, the policy sets a dangerous precedent for subsequent restriction of other academic discourse; the control of one form of expression based upon content implies the power to control any or all academic discourse."

Surely most ideas that have changed human history have at one time been considered "unusual or unexpected," and a university's function should be to encourage scrutiny and debate of a wide variety of ideas—not to squelch them. Students who have problems with materials presented in class are free to voice their objections and argue their opinions, but for the institution to step in and paternally shield them from ideas that make them uncomfortable does a disservice both to their education and to the cause of free speech in general. As undergraduate and CAF co-chair Brian Smith told the Regents at their October meeting, "I am an adult and I do not want or need you to protect me....We need to preserve academic freedom to assure that the boundaries of knowledge are not sealed for future generations."

Since Iowa is the first state to pass such a policy, allowing it to stand would set an extremely dangerous precedent for the rest of the country—especially in the context of current efforts nationwide by reactionary groups like the Christian Coalition to limit classroom content to materials that fit their own peculiar definition of morality. Although the policy may seem laughable now, a slight shift in the political winds could make it the instrument for ideologically-based purges. Controlling academic discourse has often been a first strike in attacks on wider freedoms, as the history of Nazism in the 1930s and McCarthyism in the 1950s clearly shows.

Although the forces favoring the policy are powerful, the prospects for repealing it are far from hopeless. The October version was publicly condemned by the American Association of University Professors, the Iowa Civil Liberties Union, Noam Chomsky, the Association of Big Ten Students, the UI Graduate Student Senate, Teachers for a Democratic Culture, and the *Des Moines Register*. CAF is currently seeking statements of opposition to the new policy from concerned individuals and groups.

Jean Fallow is a member of the Campaign for Academic Freedom and a graduate student in Comparative Literature at the University of Iowa. For more information, please write or call the Campaign for Academic Freedom at 315 Brown Street #2, Iowa City, IA 52245; (319) 339-5481.

NEWSCLIPS

some of the articles with regard to the question of sexuality in the classroom.

On the one hand, Jean Fallow argues forcefully against the Sexually Explicit Materials policy imposed on the University of Iowa which required teachers to warn students about any possibly offensive materials, a policy inspired by conservative complaints about films concerning homosexuality.

On the other hand, Nancy Stumhofer argues with equal passion that women students should not be subjected to a chilly classroom climate, as occurred because of male student comments about a painting of a nude woman hung in her classroom.

To sex or not to sex, is that the question? Not quite. There is a difference between the use of explicit materials in an academic discussion of sexuality and the permanent display of a painting of a nude woman in a class which has nothing to do with art. There is a difference between opening up a dialogue about issues of sexuality and silencing students by permitting offensive comments to permeate the classroom environment.

Nancy Stumhofer, I think, would agree with this distinction. She had no objection to Goya's painting itself. She had no objection to discussions of sexuality (including pictures of naked women) when appropriate, and one of the more bizarre attacks on her was a ludicrous charge of sexual harassment by two men because she had distributed an article analyzing the use of women's bodies in art. Jean Fallow, I think, would likewise agree that the imposition of sexual elements irrelevant to a class and against the wishes of the teacher and students is inappropriate.

Recently, the National Association of Scholars published its "Statement on Sexual Harassment and Academic Freedom," which declares that "a chill has descended on academic discussions of sensitive but legitimate topics, such as human sexuality, sex differences, and sexual roles." Jean Fallow could tell them that the chill on discussions of sexuality is coming from the same place it always has—conservatives who want to protect students from "offensive" material.

The NAS contends that sexual harassment policies have been used for "ideological persecution" and make sexual harassment into "a ubiquitous 'thought crime.'" But beyond these base-

NEWSCLIPS

less generalizations (and the inaccurate claim that some policies use "a wholly subjective test"), the NAS offers no way to "define sexual harassment precisely." The NAS wants sexual harassment confined to behavior "that is manifestly sexual and that clearly violates the rights of others," a more vague and arbitrary standard than any current sexual harassment policy. What is "manifestly sexual"? What are these rights? While a better understanding of sexual harassment is needed, the NAS doesn't begin to specify anything.

The recent publicity about harassment cases across the country is due to the fact that accused individuals are using the media to protest against the unfair procedures and arbitrary decisions which have always been a part of college disciplinary hearings. The answer is to create better procedures which are fair to both the accused and accuser, rather than the current system which serves only public relations and administrative power.

For too long, sexuality has been treated as a taboo subject in academia. And—perhaps not coincidentally—sexual harassment and the chilly climate for women has been ignored. There is no double standard when we condemn sexual harassment and simultaneously defend the study of sexuality in the classroom.

Grade Inflation Hysteria

The recent *Doonesbury* series depicting a student who sues his college because a professor gave him a low grade was a satire that many conservatives apparently think is little different from the truth. John Leo complains in *U.S. News & World Report*, "For whatever reasons (and the feel-good self-esteem movement is surely one), marks have broken free of performance and become more and more unreal."

Leo is not alone in his worries. According to Arthur Levine, "When GPA's are artificially high, evaluation of student performance loses its meaning." Levine advocates a "honors" "high pass" "pass" and "fail" system because "the current system is too complex because it offers too many options—A, B, C, D, and F, with plus and minus variations." But even those who share Levine's belief in the dire threat of grade inflation must recognize that his alternative

Letter to a Friend Who Attended a Paglia Lecture

Curtis Perry

DEAR ———:

CAMILLE PAGLIA IS interested in sexuality as a primitive, tempestuous, aggressive force which shapes everything, like it or not. It is, for her, at the base of all great art, since great artists become great by trying to come to grips with its power. Since she sees sexual aggression as basic and natural, she pooh-poohs liberal policies that act as if it were somehow controllable. She likes people who aggressively stake their claim to something, and aggressively fashion a sexual identity; she doesn't like people who pretend that the fundamental sexual tensions of nature can be legislated away. When she says that a woman in a mini-skirt is asking to be raped, then, she is saying not that rape is "good" or "fun," but that it is an expression of a sexual aggression so basic as to be beyond the effective control of legislation.

I imagine that this line of argument has some appeal: clearly there is in humans an instinctual desire that is repressed by and for society. Nobody, not even the feminists and French academics she lampoons, would deny that. In fact—I think you have to take my word on this one—her best points (about the relationship between bodily morphology and creativity, for example) are never original: they are taken from Freud, from Freudian thinkers, and from some of the French philosophers that she attacks so mercilessly all the time. Again, this is ok, since not much is ever really original. Since she poses as a wildly original thinker, however, it is at least ironic. What is unique in Paglia's argument is her baffling unwillingness to consider the good of society at all: she looks for good art, individual self-expression, etc., without worrying too much about the price paid. Why? She writes: "Sexual freedom, sexual liberation. A modern delusion. We are hierarchical animals. Sweep one hierarchy away, and another will take its place." In other words, she says struggle is unavoidable, so why not just go with it (interestingly, this parallels what men have said about rape for years: relax and enjoy it). I think this response is a cop out masquerading as intellectual strength. Why not try to figure out what is best?

A lot of Paglia's lectures, book reviews, and essays consist of generalizations about sexuality surrounded by really nasty pot-shots at other academics. Clearly, she is more entertaining than other academics (I happily include myself here!), and clearly she is reaching a wider audience than almost anybody else. Also, I think that there is a grain of truth in many of her attacks on "Political Correctness" and "empty academic jargon": there are knee-jerk radicals out there (just as there are knee-jerk everything-elses), and there are certainly plenty of professional academics who just try to cash in on the latest professional trends (this has always been true). However, I think are attacks are really overstated: most academics are just honestly trying to figure something out, and are doing it in a more careful manner than Paglia herself.

One of the most common attacks Paglia levels at academics is to describe them as abstract, empty thinkers who know nothing real and pragmatic about anything that matters (i.e. sex). Because academic books are aimed only at other academics, the argument goes, they cannot be about anything of common interest. Paglia, by contrast, is accessible (sort of)—and hence pragmatic, hands-on, and true. This line of reasoning strikes me as being really dangerous, because it appeals powerfully to America's basic distrust of intellectualism as "elitest."

We are living today in a world where very few people have either the time or the skills to think anything through for themselves. Television packages news and information into small, clear stories; political activism consists of sloganeering and media display. A lot of what passes for public debate is really just an avalanche of conflicting images. The university, by contrast, has always been a place where people were supposed to be given the time, training, and support necessary to think things through.

Academics do two separate things: teach, and write books which are read only by other academics. The importance of the former is clear, especially given the pace of information in our public lives today. The importance of the latter is less obvious, but still has to do with the function of the university. Academic books have a very powerful influence on the ideas of professors. These professors teach a wide range of students. These students leave the academy and go into all walks of life. Consequently, even though academic books are largely unread by non-specialists, they nevertheless have a role to play in the mental hygiene of society.

Paglia's public style, by contrast, is entertaining; it basically consists of soundbites instead of careful, linear reasoning; it fits with the hit-and-run skirmishes of public debate. However, the tyranny of the soundbite is precisely what academics today must fight against if the university is to fulfill its social function. Since the humanities are about detailed interpretation and careful reasoning, they cannot

always be effectively reproduced in a medium (the public lecture, the talk show, etc.) that demands pizzaz. A carefully thought out analysis wouldn't go over as well in the popular media. By attacking academics whose style is less accessible than hers, Paglia misses the point of academic writing. Those academics who attempt to respond to Paglia on her own ground (in televised debates, say) find that their customary carefulness—at least arguably a virtue in the classroom—makes them seem awkward in a public forum that demands the quick and pithy response. Moreover, since public debates (about "political correctness" and so on) help shape public policy (i.e. money) and public opinion, Paglia's slanders, although shoddy and misguided, have a real effect.

In addition to these big complaints, I've got a series of smaller bones to pick. For one thing, when Paglia calls a colleague "corrupt" or "ignorant" in a popular lecture or newspaper interview it is fundamentally unfair since the audience will rarely be able to judge the truth of the accusation. In one case, Paglia claimed that a professor (Judith Butler) is considered a fraud by those at the top of her profession. Since the audience here is not academic, it takes Paglia at her word and assumes that some authoritative group of scholars has denounced the professor in question (this is not the case—she is better respected than Paglia herself). Oddly, in the next breath, Paglia complains that Johns Hopkins, Princeton, and Harvard were in a bidding war for the "fradulent" professor's services. Here the accusation becomes absurd: who is at the "top" of the field if not the faculty of these kinds of institutions? Paglia herself, apparently.

Finally, a lot of Paglia's ranting is simple sour grapes. Since her writing is not clearly reasoned (and clear reasoning is what the academy at its best is supposed to be about) she had a notoriously difficult time landing an academic job and getting her dissertation published (the "top" of the profession has always seen her as a bit of a fraud, you might say). Even now, she is known more as a loose cannon than as a reputable scholar. Her attacks on the academy read like attempts at revenge. I feel strongly about this because Paglia consistently, publicly, and maliciously misrepresents what I do for a living.

Curtis Perry is a Lecturer in the History and Literature Program at Harvard.

"I SAW FIRSTHAND AN EXAMPLE of how the media distorts the presentation of feminists, and how feminist debate is inhibited in response. At an event at the Ninety-second Street YMHA in New York City in 1992, which included a range of feminists, Camille Paglia's name came up and the audience hissed. Later, when an entirely unrelated subject was under discussion, the director of a segment for *60 Minutes* stood up and, with cameras rolling, asked us about Paglia.

At this, Gloria Steinem stood and demanded that the cameras stop. The director protested, but Steinem insisted, rightly pointing out that it is bad journalistic ethics for a news team to shape an event that it is supposed to simply cover. She told the producer that the audience had paid thirty dollars each to come raise their issues; while the news team was welcome to film the event, it was the audience members' night and their agenda, not the TV crew's.

Those moments were cut. Millions of Americans saw only Steinem shouting to stop the cameras, followed by Paglia saying, in effect, "See?" The TV audience never got to hear the discussion; all they got was more "evidence" that feminists are thought police; *60 Minutes* never apologized for its tactics; the important debate of Paglia's position in relation to the panelists' never took place."

—**Naomi Wolf**, *Fire With Fire* (Random House, 1993)

"AND BEAUTY, ACCORDING TO, UM, Miss, um, Naomi Wolf, is a heterosexist conspiracy by men in a room to keep feminism back—and all that *crap* that's going on. I call her, by the way, 'Little Miss Pravda.'...I won't appear with her. *Oprah*'s tried to get me on with her: I won't go on with her. A talk show in Italy wanted to fly me over to appear with her. *No.* I always say, 'Would Caruso appear with Tiny Tim?'"

—**Camille Paglia**, *Sex, Art, and American Culture* (Vintage, 1992)

NEWSCLIPS

solves nothing. Levine is mistaken if he thinks "it is impossible for most faculty members to discriminate that finely"—on the contrary, it is impossible for most faculty members to avoid making those discriminations. The plus and minus system, in a time of grade inflation, is a barrier to lowered standards since it allows distinctions to be made even when grades are inflated.

William Cole, writing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, inaccurately blames the humanities for the problem: "I believe that the existence of absolute, objective, and quantifiable measures of quality have somewhat stymied grade inflation in the sciences. Lacking such criteria, humanities instructors could hold the line only with toughness and rigor—and they have not."

But a *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Winter 1991) study of grade inflation from 1962 to 1985 found that the average grades increased from 2.38 to 2.91—about one-half of a grade—regardless of the field. Contrary to Cole's assumption, large differences in grading between departments existed even in 1962, ranging from 2.19 (Chemistry) to 2.67 (Music). By 1985, virtually the same ranges existed, from 2.53 (Math) to 3.16 (Music). The low-grading departments like Chemistry, Economics, and Math experienced nearly the same amount of grade inflation as the humanities and the social sciences (.457 vs. a .532 increase). (English was the only exception, as it rose .80 points and became a high-grading department.)

While grade inflation remains a problem because outstanding students can get high grades without much effort, it is hardly a crisis. Even with grade inflation, there are differences in student achievement and incentives for students to do well. Harvard professor Harvey Mansfield claims, "professors have lost faith in the value of reason and hence lost faith in the value of their status. Their inability to give grades that reflect the standards of their profession is a sign of a serious loss of morale." This is sheer nonsense. The old critics of grade inflation prophesized a corruption of higher education which never happened. Still harboring these resentments, they now blame the familiar straw enemy of relativism for the alleged corruption of the humanities and grades.

NEWSCLIPS

Selling Political Correctness

The attacks on "political correctness" aren't just used by conservatives to stifle opposing views. Now advertisers are using the phrase "politically incorrect" as a marketing device. The Madison Center for Educational Affairs recently published *The Common Sense Guide to American Colleges*, with "politically incorrect" proudly emblazoned on the top right-hand corner, while Berke Breathed's latest collection of cartoons is titled, *Politically, Fashionably, and Aerodynamically Incorrect*, and Rush Limbaugh's newsletter is advertised as an "absolutely politically incorrect publication."

A new *National Review* book is titled the *Politically Incorrect Reference Guide*. A company advertises "politically incorrect" bank checks printed with conservative cartoons. A mail-order business in Springfield, Virginia called "The Right Stuff" was started "in response to the PC movement" and sells merchandise like Attila the Hun neckties and Contra Coffee to those who are "politically right...not politically correct." Another company sells T-shirts with "Politically Incorrect" on the front and "Free Minds, Free Markets, Free Society" on the back.

The selling power of PC has even reached into the mainstream, as a recent radio commercial for AT&T features a reference to the "PC police." Now, there's even a movie called *P.C.U.*, a weak *Animal House*-imitator being sarcastically promoted as the movie "for those of you who are still politically correct."

Perhaps the most amusing example of how economically powerful the phrase "politically incorrect" has become is a federal lawsuit filed on November 2, 1993 in New York by the cable channel Comedy Central on behalf of its talk show, *Politically Incorrect*. Comedy Central is suing comedian Jackie Mason because his theater show was called, "Jackie Mason, Politically Incorrect." According to Comedy Central, "People could get confused. It tends to dilute the rights to the name that we've built up and spent a lot of money on."

NEWSCLIPS CONTINUE ON PAGE 23

Textual Personae: Camille Paglia and the Popular Press

Ana Cox

CAMILLE PAGLIA HOVERED at the edges of my good liberal-intellectual consciousness for quite awhile before I took a more "professional" interest in her. I was amused by her December 1990 Op-Ed piece—"Madonna—Finally, a Real Feminist"—in the *New York Times*; and while I was puzzled by her "no doesn't always mean no" essay on date rape in *Newsday* in the spring of 1991, I pretty much dismissed her. My hopes that she would disappear from the media world were bolstered by her appearance in *Rolling Stone*'s May 1991 "Hot List" as a "Hot Critic." But she bounced back from that kiss of death, and by September 1991, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* was a best-seller.

The publication of *Sex, Art and American Culture* in November 1992, depicting Camille herself as the main selling point on the cover, was what really started me wondering about what exactly would shoot a second-rate academic into fame of such relatively stratospheric proportions. My curiosity was further aroused by Paglia's appearance at the University of Texas last spring, where those not among the lucky 500 to get inside shouted "Camille, Camille" from behind locked doors.

While it seems that Paglia's stardom has faded from the fever pitch it reached at the end of 1992 (when conservative talk-show host John McLaughlin proclaimed her "thinker of the year"), she has indeed become, as *Wired* magazine predicted, a "Marshall McLuhan of the 1990s." She has attained "celebrity/expert" status: The *New York Times* asked her, along with such other notables as Robert Redford, to describe herself in one word. More ominously, she was listed among the "100 members of the cultural elite" in *Time* magazine last fall.

From December of 1990 to May of 1993, the popular press put out an average of over twenty articles a month on Paglia, in magazines ranging from *People* to *New Republic* to *Vanity Fair*. Still, despite the tidal wave of media attention, few in the popular press have taken on the 700-page tome of *Sexual Personae* itself. Rather, Paglia herself became the principal interest. Paglia's success is often called a "rarity" or "remarkable." But as much as these articles point to the uniqueness of her position, almost of all of them seem to beg the question of "why?" Why has an "obscure," "unknown professor" from University of the Arts, a "virtual academic exile to Ivy League elitists," become a media star?

In his discussion of celebrity, Richard Dyer says that individuals become stars because their image contains or embodies certain conflicts that exist in a culture. Paglia's stardom stems as well from the ideological tensions of contemporary American life. Paglia, as an anti-intellectual academic, as a scholar who has written "on subjects from cultural antiquity to pop music" and, perhaps most importantly, as an "anti-feminist feminist," represents the cultural conflicts in late twentieth century America over the role of women and the purpose of academia, a confusion brought to a boiling point by the debate over "political correctness." As a convenient screen for these conflicts, Paglia functions as Dyer argues other "star images" do: as an image which can be manipulated by the media to "manage or resolve" the "contradictions within and between ideologies" that the "star" contains.

The connection between Paglia and PC is a vital one, because the ubiquitous coverage of the political correctness issue amplifies the same cultural conflicts that Paglia's image as media star embodies. To the critics of "political correctness," and much of the press, it seems that women, nonwhites and others of the PC sort have gained control of higher education and used it to push their own culture at the expense of the Western tradition. Along these lines, the press welcomes Paglia as a savior from "the feminist academic Establishment." An article in the *Boston Globe* stated: "Paglia has stepped in during a near-crisis in higher education—recognizing the need for an independent, alternative to group-think and ideology."

The explicit coverage of the so-called "PC debate" not only brings to the forefront certain traditional conflicts within American culture, but grounds them in a specifically gender-based language which attempts to split solid, upstanding and useful education from faddish academia. The critique of the "politically correct," by scapegoating "academic feminism," makes gender central to these issues.

Especially in its coverage of Paglia, the media shows "political correctness" and the "feminist academic Establishment" as dominating cultural activity with new regulations. In this atmosphere of too many rules, Paglia becomes famous for breaking them. Paglia's stance as "anti-feminist feminist" represents the cultural conflict over

women's roles, brought to a head once again by the coverage of political correctness. The portrayal of Paglia's earlier lack of prominence as the fault of "narrow-minded," "mainstream academics and feminists who couldn't handle her dissident views" links the public's resentment of higher education to resentment of feminism. The depiction of Paglia's role as an academic "outsider" and revolutionary relies heavily on the description of contemporary academia as an effeminate and feminizing place.

The press casts Paglia as masculine, with vivid images of battle and violence: her book is a "scorched earth attack" and her lectures resemble "an automatic weapon spitting out bullets." At the same time, Paglia's own persona is a strange mix of both masculine and feminine descriptions, emphasizing to the point of ridicule her own claims to gender transgressions. The media turns this transgression into a source of derision, portraying her as a "bisexual vampire," and as a woman whose "ideas...are overshadowed by...[her] loud, irritating persona." The media's inability to characterize her as essentially masculine or feminine, shown in the gender schizophrenia of the images used to describe her, turns Paglia herself into a grotesque, flawed and ultimately non-threatening figure, a woman done in by her own exhibitionism.

During Paglia's appearance at the University of Texas last spring, those not among the lucky 500 to get inside shouted "Camille, Camille" from behind locked doors.

In talking about Paglia's academic background in relation to her persistent denigration of academia, the press enforces a dichotomy between "Frenchified intellectuals" in the "Academy" and "sensible proposals to improve" education. This separation, as portrayed in the press' retelling of Paglia's success story, allows Paglia, "a devout believer in classical education and in academic standards and discipline," to defeat the "Academy" in a battle with the all high-tech trimmings which, coincidentally or not, mirrored the Gulf War coverage that appeared around the same time Paglia did. Memorably, it was Roger Kimball who called Paglia's style "criticism as an exercise in saturation bombing."

In creating this war between Paglia and the "intellectuals," the press builds on and expands Paglia's attacks on "the fashionable French philosophes" and "the anxious academic personality." They strengthen Paglia's attacks not simply by playing up intellectuals as weak, but also by framing Paglia's criticisms a part of a "battle," a contest of masculinity which Paglia always seems to be winning. Paglia is an "academic terrorist," "come to wrest control of the ivory tower." She "likes to throw punches, both physical and verbal, against smug formulas and codes of political correctness" and "jousts with the Politically Correct." That Paglia "wrest[s]...the ivory tower...from the Frenchified intellectuals" implies that the intellectuals who build upon the ideas of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan have lost something of their masculinity in the process—indeed, the use of "ivory tower" here seems to beg for a reading of Paglia as both castrator and masquerader.

The descriptions of Paglia's "full blown assault on the intellectual and moral corruption of contemporary academia" carry the implicit assumption that Paglia's aggressiveness is unusual within higher education. That Paglia's voice is at once "distinctly non-U," and "a voice of machine-gun-like frenzy" suggests that violence and energy are inherently at conflict with the "U." This same assumption of passivity drives the description of Paglia as "The diminutive Ph.D. [who] drives a red Grand Am. She loves Guns and Roses and football. She's a student and fan of raw power," a framing which suggests that such masculine pursuits as cars, heavy metal and football are at odds with being a Ph.D.

Paglia's star image encapsulates the conflict between anti-intellectualism and education. The portrayal of Paglia's success degrades the "politically correct" academy and distances it from the general public. The implication that academia is effeminate allows Americans to resolve the conflict between "masculine" education and "Frenchified" intellectualism in a way which reinforces existing conceptions of gender inequalities.

Having characterized Paglia's attack on academia as a masculine "battle" and endowing her threat to feminism with such power, the press seems unable to agree on the picture of Paglia herself. She is described as "a mushroom-size librarian" and as having "the grip of a wrestler." Seen in the light of this apparent gender schizophrenia, describing her as "an angry nun trapped in Snow White's glass coffin" seems like an attempt to negotiate this gender confusion by implying that Paglia may be trapped in her sex against her will.

The media's eager reporting of Paglia's actual bisexuality, combined with this apparent confu-

—*The*— CAMILLE PAGLIA *Media Hype Guide*

"A Scholar and a Not-So-Gentle Woman," *Cosmopolitan*. November 1991, 106-110.

Caldwell, Gail. "Hurricane Camille," *The Boston Globe*, May 2, 1991.

Chin, Paula. "Street Fighting Woman," *People Weekly*, April 1, 1992, 14-16.

Duffy, Martha. "The Bête Noire of Feminism," *Time*, January 13, 1992, 62-63.

Kakutani, Michiko. "On Men, Women and One Maverick Thinker," *The New York Times*, September 15, 1992, B2.

Kalbecker, Walter. "20 Questions: Camille Paglia," *Playboy*, October 1991, 133, 170-1.

Kimball, Roger. "Dragon Lady of Academe," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 1992.

Mooney, Carolyn J. "Camille Paglia, Academic Guerilla, Relishes Her Role as Feminist Scourge," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 1, 1992, A14-16.

Seavey, Todd. "A Crazy Man's Utopia: Bisexual Vampire Women," *Reason*, June 1992, 22.

Stanfill, Francesca. "Woman Warrior," *New York*, March 4, 1991, 23-30.

Stillman, Deanne. "The Many Masks of Camille Paglia," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, February 16, 1992, 28-33.

Welty, Ellen. "Living Dangerously: Confessions of an Ex-Good Girl," *Mademoiselle*, August 1991, 120+.

Winston, Diane. "Paglia: An 'Academic Terrorist,'" *The Baltimore Sun*, May 19, 1991.

Wolf, Naomi. "Feminist Fatale," *The New Republic*, March 19, 1992, 23-25.

—Ana Cox

sion over her gender, makes her seem more like an hermaphrodite than an androgynous neuter. This confusion expresses an important "loss of boundaries" that is crucial in the ridicule of women who "make spectacles of themselves." Though the press portrays Paglia as self-made, this message of self-determination loses its power as Paglia becomes female spectacle. *Cosmopolitan* describes her rise to fame in the same terms one would apply to a starlet—"she has posed...shown off...been featured in...created a stir"—and *Time* notes that as a "new media princess...[she] acts the part." Characterizing Paglia as "above all a performer" allows the media to blame Paglia for the gender contradictions she seems to exhibit and to call her style "a particularly distasteful form of literary exhibitionism." Seen in this light, Paglia's apparent self-determination equates female self-creation with crossing gender boundaries and ultimately, grotesqueness.

The visual representations of Paglia that appear in the popular press make this combination of hermaphroditism and repulsiveness explicit. Photojournalists repeatedly shoot her from a low angle, emphasizing her wrinkles and age while at the same time implying a domineering presence. She also frequently portrayed with her mouth open, arms flailing, the epitome of the unruly woman. The juxtaposition of her with weaponry seems to be another favorite trick—*People* illustrates "Street Fighting Woman" with a photo of Paglia and a switchblade, and *New York*'s "Woman Warrior" comes with a picture of Paglia wielding a antique sword.

The articles which call Paglia a "bisexual vampire woman" or "the dragon lady of academe" show how the media reinforces a message that women who create themselves create monsters—self-determination becomes grotesqueness. Journalists repeatedly compare Paglia to the archetypal grotesque female image, the witch. They describe her voice as "a grating pitch that comes perilously close to a cackle" and her work as "weird...somewhat like eye of newt." She is a "demonic witness" to some and a "prankster" or "jester" to others, and finally "the Wicked Witch of the West," all descriptions which on one level or another relate Paglia's persona to both performance and horrific or comic repulsion. Even her feminist critics cannot escape comparing Paglia to grotesque imagery: Naomi Wolf called her the "nipple-pierced person's Phyllis Schlafly."

The media not only declare Paglia a threat to feminism, but make that threat more significant by representing the feminists as responding excessively, frantically to that threat. Articles declare that Paglia's "theories have aroused profound displeasure among feminist authors" and that feminists "shudder at her statements." *Playboy* saw the feminist reaction to Paglia as so violent that her body itself might be in danger: "You've received threats from feminists. Do you fear for your personal safety?"

The label "anti-feminist feminist" neatly reflects how the media manages Paglia's sex with her success and apparent power. While conservatives and a perhaps paranoid media find Paglia's ideas useful in defeating the powerful feminist establishment, they see Paglia's character—"loud, irritating" and strangely masculine—as exemplifying some of the negative characteristics that conservative have attempted to place upon feminists for a long time.

But after casting Paglia's ideas in masculine light, the press treats Paglia's star image in such a way that it separates her ideas (with their virile battle imagery) from her sex, a separation which reflects the conflict over female roles in society. Hence, conservatives can use and celebrate her ideas as an "anti-feminist" even as they discourage other women, or anyone, from wanting or envying her power as a "feminist." Portrayed as a woman who, when given a chance to create herself, creates a monster, Paglia's image is indeed "a shiny new weapon in the hands of the right."

Ana Cox is a fourth-year studying history at the University of Chicago.

Great Thoughts from Camille Paglia

"Male urination really is a kind of accomplishment, an arc of transcendance."

"An erection is architectural, sky-pointing. Female tumescence, through blood or water, is slow, gravitational, amorphous. In the war for human identity, male tumescence is an instrument, female tumescence an obstruction. The fatty female body is a sponge."

"An erection is a thought and the orgasm an act of imagination."

"We did not need French post-structuralism, whose pedantic jargon, clumsy convolutions, and prissy abstractions have spread throughout academe and the arts and are now blighting the most promising minds of the next generation."

"The American academics who went bananas over Gallic theory were callow 90-pound weaklings, trying to pump themselves up with powdered tiger's milk."

"If civilization had been left in female hands, we would still be living in grass huts."

"Every month, it is woman's fate to face the abyss of time and being, the abyss which is herself."

"The two volumes of *Sexual Personae*, with the author as Amazon epic quester, may be the longest book yet written by a woman, exceeding in this respect even George Eliot's hefty *Middlemarch*."

"Today's women students are meeting their oppressors in dangerously seductive new form, as successful, congenial female professors who are themselves victims of a rigid foreign ideology."

"We must smash women's studies. Drive them out....Women's studies people have shown their true Stalinism."

"This date rape thing is a crock."

"Many feminists define verbal sexual remarks as a form of rape."

"There is *one voice* speaking about date rape from coast to coast, one voice, one stupid, shrewish, puritanical, sermonizing, hysterical voice."

"Part of the sizzle of sex comes from the danger of sex."

"*What* do you want? Do you want sex or *not*? If you don't want it, stay home and *do your nails*!"

JOHN SILBER'S *Familiar Quotations*

"The academy must free itself of enslavement by ideological license."

"In the English department and the departments of literature, we have not allowed the structuralists or the deconstructionists to take over."

"We have refused to take on dance therapy because we don't understand the theory of it."

"We have resisted the fad of Afrocentrism. We have not fallen into the clutches of the multiculturists."

"We have resisted the official dogmas of radical feminism. We have done the same thing with regard to gay and lesbian liberation and animal liberation."

"There are not very many children who come from lesbian homes because lesbians don't produce children and neither do gay people produce children."

"We refuse to believe that students at Boston University need a college education in how to perform the sex act."

"Why has Massachusetts suddenly become so popular for people who are accustomed to living in the tropical climate? Amazing. There has got to be a welfare magnet going on here."

"The voice of Adolf Hitler" (referring to Jesse Jackson).

"There's no point in my making a speech on crime control to a bunch of drug addicts" (refusing to campaign in the predominantly black Roxbury neighborhood).

"The racism of Jews is quite phenomenal."

"Your husband is a parachute" (explaining to a female professor why she didn't need job security).

"Henry the Eighth with tits" (describing English professor Helen Vendler).

"I'm a lot closer to John Wayne than to Machiavelli."

"I've been right so much of the time."

Resisting Silber at Boston University

Bob Dahlgren

FOR THE PAST few years conservative academics and media pundits have been attacking the gamut of liberal and left thought in academia under the rubric of "political correctness." PC as a code phrase has indeed permeated much of the thinking of students and faculty at campuses across the country. The assault on PC has been useful in silencing discussion of racism, sexism, and anti-gay bigotry as well as a variety of alternative political ideas.

Concrete evidence of this right-wing strategy came last fall when Boston University President John Silber's annual report to the Board of Trustees was made public. In his report, Silber boasted that his administration had successfully "resisted" what he termed "political correctness and ideological fads." Silber then listed "Afrocentrism," "radical feminism," "critical legal studies," "multiculturalism," "relativism," "Gay and Lesbian liberation studies," and "animal liberation studies" as among the schools of thought that have been officially "resisted" at Boston University.

Understandably shocked by the implications of this admission, the BU Faculty Council responded immediately with a statement requesting a "clarification" of Silber's declarations. Faculty Council chair James Iffland suggested that Silber's comments "appear to be in contradiction with the spirit of the statement on academic freedom found in the Faculty Handbook." In an ensuing period of heated debate, numerous former BU professors came forward to testify about their experiences with the Silber administration.

No one who is in the least bit familiar with the history of Silber's tyrannical regime at BU requires any further "clarification" of his remarks. Over the past twenty-three years the Silber administration has systematically attempted to drive off campus those student groups and faculty members who have dared to criticize its actions. There is no question that funding for student organizations and faculty hiring and tenure decisions have been conducted on an ideological basis.

Silber once declared on national television that "the more democratic a university is, the lousier it is." In its 1979 report, the Massachusetts chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union noted that it had "never, in memory, received such a large and sustained volume of complaints about a single institution." The BU student newspaper, *The Daily Free Press*, has on many occasions reported incidents where the university administration has taken photographs of campus demonstrations, maintained files on student leaders, and sent harassing letters to faculty activists nearing tenure review.

It is well documented that Silber has created an atmosphere of fear among BU employees. Shortly after leaving BU for Harvard in 1979, Helen Vendler issued this statement: "Rational speech with him [Silber] is impossible; he does not listen, and he resorts to vilification without provocation. [The Silber administration] has corrupted life and liberty on this campus." In 1982, Frances Fox Piven stated in an open letter to Silber, "your administration has created a situation where good academic work is no longer possible."

Silber has a long record of discrimination against women in particular. Perhaps the most infamous case of Silber's bullying behavior concerns former BU English professor Julia Brown. After receiving an overwhelming vote of support from her colleagues. Brown was denied tenure by Silber. Brown sued Silber and BU; in 1987 she was awarded $215,000 and a federal judge also ordered that Brown be granted tenure at BU. During hearings, the court heard evidence that Silber had once referred to the English department as "a damned matriarchy."

The Silber administration has, however, continued to act in a demeaning manner toward women. For years it has rejected demands from student groups for a university-funded rape crisis center, claiming that rape is not a problem on campus. At the beginning of this semester Silber decided to show his contempt for women at BU by admitting Ewart Yearwood, who had been suspended from Swarthmore College for stalking a female student.

The record is clear. Progressive students and faculty do not have the power to fundamentally influence academic life. It is right-wing ideologues like John Silber who make the decisions about issues such as minority recruitment, curriculum revision, and university investments. They are backed up by a large and well-funded movement of right-wing activists. This is the real "political correctness movement" that needs to be fought.

Bob Dahlgren is a member of the BU International Socialist Club's "Resist Silber" campaign (775 Commonwealth Ave., Boston MA 02215).

RESIST SILBER

Goya's *Naked Maja* and the Classroom Climate

Nancy C. Stumhofer

IN NOVEMBER OF 1991, a reproduction of Goya's painting, *The Naked Maja*, along with four other reproductions of famous paintings, was removed from a classroom at Penn State's Schuylkill Campus and rehung in the TV/Reading Room in the Student Center. The event sparked a firestorm of controversy that was carried around the world by newspapers, magazines, television specials, and radio broadcasts. The media made a mockery of the Schuylkill Campus and especially of me, the English professor who initiated the relocation of the paintings. Everyone had an opinion about the issue, but no one saw any responsibility to report the truth about what really happened. People looked at the issue as censorship or sexual harassment. No one could understand the question of classroom climate which was at the heart of the problem.

Although I tried many times to explain my perspective on what happened to reporters who interviewed me for news stories, radio shows, and a PBS Documentary called *Campus Culture Wars*, each time my comments were distorted or carefully edited to achieve some purpose of the editors or producers and not to present the truth to their readers or viewers. Now, two and a half years after the incident happened, it is even more difficult to make people understand what the issue was, but I must try or people will believe what the media has said.

A few weeks ago I received a letter from a young woman in Calumet City, Illinois, who had just seen *Campus Culture Wars*. She wrote to tell me she was disappointed that rather than attempting to discuss the painting openly to reduce ignorant "tittering," or simply moving it to the back of the room, I had taken the action of a weak person and demonstrated a "lack of personal power" when I made the University fight my battle for me. She accused me of "running away from an honest debate on the issue" and of "seeking shelter from offending ideas, words, and images rather than engaging in straightforward intellectual discussions about them." In short, I was a lousy role model for young women, and she had to write a letter to let me know that she was very disappointed in me for missing my opportunity to enlighten my students. Her letter convinced me it was time to tell my story.

In Fall 1991, the campus experienced a surge in enrollment of students needing developmental English courses, so the director of academic affairs asked me to teach an extra section of English 4. Most of the classrooms had already been assigned, so I had to teach this additional class in two different rooms. On Fridays we were assigned to room C203, which is usually used for music classes. The room is long and narrow, and the students sit in five rows of chairs lined up horizontally in front of the teacher making it necessary for the teacher to pan the room constantly to make eye contact with the students. When the students look at the teacher, they can not avoid seeing the reproductions on the wall behind her. Since the *Naked Maja* was hung in the center of the collection, it was the center of attention and hung directly above the teacher's head. Originally purchased for use in an art class, the reproductions had not been used for educational purposes for quite some time and served only as unidentified wall decorations. Few people, if any, on campus knew who had created the originals or when they had been painted.

I didn't really notice the reproductions when I first entered the classroom because I was looking for a place to put my books and notes. My attention was drawn to them when I heard some of the male students laughing and making comments to each other as they stared at something directly behind me on the wall. The girls' faces had turned red, and they looked down at their desks obviously embarrassed. As I turned around, I came face to face with a picture of a naked woman reclining on a couch with her hands behind her head displaying unabashedly all of her amply endowed female attributes. I later learned that the woman was Goya's mistress, the Duchess of Alba, Maria Cayetana, whom he had painted about 1800 and whose portrait, referred to as *The Naked Maja*, had been the subject of controversy since its creation.

The first reaction as I stood there in front of this painting was embarrassment because in a way I identified with her as a woman. I felt as though I were standing there naked, exposed and vulnerable, before my class. I certainly didn't feel very professional at that moment. I have always felt that when one woman is portrayed naked and ridiculed, we all are—even when the woman is naked of her own free will, and even if she dares people to object to her nakedness as the Duchess does. From the expressions on the faces of my female students, I wasn't alone in my response. After my initial embarrassment passed, I became angry because I knew none of my male colleagues would ever find themselves in a similar situation, nor would the male students in the class.

For centuries males have had control over the bodies and representations of women while they stood in the background fully clothed and safe from comment, saying whatever they pleased to each other about the women who appeared exposed and vulnerable before them. Regardless of whether a famous artwork or a *Playboy* centerfold elicited the sexist remarks and behavior, the results were the same: the focus of everyone's attention had turned to women's bodies and the young men's comments created a climate of disrespect for women.

My female students already lacked confidence in themselves and were reluctant to speak in class; they didn't need to be silenced further by the rude comments of the young men in the class who far outnumbered them and were much more aggressive. I knew the women would not have the courage to confront the men about their behavior. Even if they had the courage, they wouldn't do it in class, so I had to do something about it. I quickly silenced the students and expressed my displeasure with their behavior, but the damage had already been done. The chilly climate had stifled the women.

After class I talked to other students about this concern. I discovered an older student who had taken a music class in this room and been embarrassed when her male classmates started making comments about how fat the Maja was and how big her "boobs" were. Since the woman was also overweight, the comments were especially hurtful. She complained to the male professor about the situation and was ignored. While there are a number of women who don't mind looking at the body of a naked woman every time they come to class, there are a large number of women and some men who do mind. Since

it is impossible in that room not to see the woman when you look at the teacher, it is impossible not to be distracted.

The subtle and the overt sexist remarks and gestures which the painting elicited from immature males created a climate of disrespect for women and served to silence them. If women are ever going to have equal opportunity in education and at work, they must be allowed to study and work in a democratic environment free of sexism. As a teacher, it is my responsibility to provide that democratic environment for everyone in my class.

I also spoke to several of my colleagues about my experience with the painting. The German professor said that he had had a class in the room some time ago and observed a similar situation which he agreed chilled the climate for women. The women professors I spoke to also believed that it was inappropriate to display paintings in a classroom where they would distract students and provoke sexist comments that would disadvantage the women. It was important to me to determine whether my reaction to the situation was only my own perception or whether others shared my views. After speaking to teachers, students, and staff, I discovered that many people shared my assessment of the situation. It is important to note that none of the other classrooms had any wall decorations.

It is not the painting which is offensive; what is offensive is the lack of respect many men have for women in art and in life.

Several weeks went by before I decided what I would do. I spoke with a sex equity specialist who came to our campus to give a workshop for faculty, and she suggested the campus purchase a reproduction of a male nude to hang beside the *Maja*. I called my supervisor and expressed my concern that the reproduction was chilling the climate for the women in my classroom and distracting all the students. I offered two ways we could solve the problem: we could purchase a reproduction of a male nude and add it to the collection to level the playing field for men and women, or we could relocate the paintings to an appropriate area which was not used for classes. He found my suggestions somewhat amusing and responded by saying that it would probably be easier just to take it down. I agreed because my goal was not to double the distractions and embarrass both men and women, but rather to provide a comfortable learning environment for everyone.

I suggested that the Campus purchase additional paintings that would show women in a greater variety of roles than just mistress or mother and reveal men in roles other than thinker or religious martyr. (The other paintings in the collection included *Madonna Della Sedia* by Raphael, *Portrait of a Young Man* by Angelo Bronzini, *Crucifixion* by Pietro Perugino, and *Wheatfields* by Jacob Van Ruisdael.) To make the collection an educational tool, I suggested everything should be labeled. I later wrote a grant to get money from the Enhancement Fund, so we could obtain additional works, but I was turned down—perhaps out of fear of what I might purchase.

I believed the problem had been solved since my supervisor had agreed the reproduction should be relocated; however, he later called me back to say he had discussed my concern with the music professor, and they had agreed that *Maja* would be taken down when I was scheduled to use the room and put up again afterward. In case the music professor forgot to take the painting down, I was supposed to take "it" up with him. Suddenly the problem had turned into a controversy between the music professor and the English professor, and I was made to feel like a Victorian prude who found pictures of naked women shocking. My concern about classroom climate had been dismissed as unimportant. The problem was mine and mine alone.

My supervisor then asked the Faculty Affairs Committee to help solve "my" problem, and they set out to find me another room to teach in. One of the male faculty members offered to move his class, so I could have his room. But what happened in my classroom was not an isolated incident. Every female student in every class scheduled in that room would have to be subjected to the chill. The problem was not mine alone, and if I had been the only person affected, I probably never would have brought the problem to the administration's attention. I refused to accept their solutions because they didn't solve the problem.

At an October meeting of the University Women's Commission, the response of the participants seemed unanimous. They agreed that the painting created a chilly climate for women and should be displayed elsewhere than in a classroom. The University affirmative action officer was at that meeting and supported my position. She indicated that the situation might have legal ramifications and told me she would discuss it with the University's legal representatives. She later called to tell me there were legal precedents that would indicate this case could be considered sexual harassment.

Personally, I was concerned with the climate issue—I wanted the young women to have an opportunity to learn in an atmosphere free of sexism—but I knew it would take more than a concern about climate to prompt the administration to take action. After contacting the affirmative action officer and discussing the issue, the Campus Executive Officer decided to take action. When he asked the Diversity Committee if anyone had objections to relocating the reproductions, no one voiced an objection. Consequently, he had the reproductions taken down. The problem arose when the paintings weren't rehung immediately. It was never anyone's intent to put them in storage; it just happened that no one had decided where to put them before they were taken down. No one knew that the world would turn upside down because a few cheap reproductions were out of sight for a few days. I was told that the music professor had taken the *Naked Maja* home with him, possibly to protect her from some dark fate that he had imagined was in store for her.

GOOSESTEPPING ON GOYA: THE MEDIA BLITZ

When the media became involved, the issue took on a life of its own and the story spread like wildfire to all corners of the world. The local newspaper, *The Pottsville Republican*, was the first to break the story and my guess is that the person who leaked the story to the press had never heard or understood the classroom climate issue. This person was convinced that censorship was the only issue, and newspapers love to dramatize censorship issues. It was hard for me to understand how anyone could construe moving paintings from a limited access classroom to an open access reading room in the Student Center as censorship, but then the reproductions were out of sight for a short

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

time while administrators decided where to relocate them, and certain people panicked and expected the worst.

No one was concerned about the relocation of the other four paintings, only the painting of the naked woman. Since the reproductions were never labeled and the person who purchased them had long since retired, newspaper reporters, teachers, students—everyone—ran to the library searching for art books to identify the paintings. It was the most active educational experience concerning art that I have ever seen at the campus. Even the two art experts who came down from University Park couldn't identify all the paintings immediately.

Although the reporter who covered the story for the *Republican* tried to present a balanced account by quoting both sides, her efforts were quickly overshadowed by the headlines which read, "Penn State Removes Goya Nude" and "Famed 'Maja' Painting Is Sex Harassment, Complainant Says." (Interestingly enough, the article exposing the "censorship" problem at the Schuylkill Campus printed the clothed version of the *Maja* painting.) Student Government Association president Jim Ford said, "We think it's ludicrous censorship. I find it hypocritical that the University strives for cultural diversity and then removes culture from its classrooms." By the end of the article readers believed the issues were censorship and sexual harassment because they were the issues that had been presented most forcefully. The truth is that I never claimed I had been sexually harassed by the painting. The University lawyers simply stated there was a legal precedent by which someone could claim harassment. But the end result was that the classroom climate argument became lost quickly because people didn't understand the issue, and the topic doesn't sell papers.

When the story broke, the media had a field day ridiculing the campus administration and presenting me as a scapegoat on whom to heap all of their contempt. The personal abuse I experienced in the period since the story first broke is beyond belief. John Leo's "PC Follies: The Year in Review" declared: "The offending picture had hung on the same classroom wall for 10 years before it began harassing Stumhofer. It has been exiled to a student center, where it is presumably on probation." Robert Hughes wrote in *The Culture of Complaint*, "American feminism has a large repressive fringe, self-caricaturing and often abysmally trivial, like the academic thought police who recently managed to get a reproduction of Goya's *Naked Maja* removed from a classroom at Penn State University."

Nat Hentoff wrote at least three emotionally charged articles that made me look ridiculous. He wrote, "*Naked Maja*, minding her own business, had been on the wall of the classroom for more than 10 years. Some say 15 years. No one has seemed to mind her presence—and some probably enjoyed the painting—until Professor Stumhofer realized the danger it posed....As for the opposition to the primitive displacement of the Goya, Professor Stumhofer *sniffs*: 'Our students probably perceive the removal as somehow a threat to their freedom. But all that happened was that this sexually harassing painting was relocated to a place where people didn't have to go.'" Hentoff misrepresented and misquoted my comments, over and over again.

Scott Simon from National Public Radio grilled me for an hour and a half trying to get me rattled, badgering me about why I didn't give my students an art lesson and get a discussion going about why a painting of a nude woman led certain members of the class to behave like schmucks (there is enough work to do in a remedial English class without teaching about art, especially since I am not qualified to teach art) and why the women in the class were silently embarrassed—*if* they actually were. The implication was made again and again that my concern was not legitimate and that I shouldn't have made my view public.

The "Goosestepping on Goya" article in the *New York Daily News* said, "Listen up, Penn State: Any professor so boorish as to complain that a painting by Goya is a form of sexual harassment should be encouraged to take up another line of work....Any feminist too stupid to realize this kind of idiocy trivializes the whole issue of sexual harassment should be locked in a small, windowless room with the entire Senate Judiciary Committee...."

I wasn't even safe at home. A woman reporter from a New York radio station called and berated me on the air for trivializing sexual harassment issues. Law firms from Delaware and Michigan wrote to let me know that they also believed I was trivializing sexual harassment. A local lawyer wrote in an editorial to the *Republican* that I should make paper doll clothes and put them on the painting to cover the naked woman, so she couldn't harass me anymore.

As regional, national, and international expressions of derision kept coming in to the University, the administration became more tense. Faculty and staff pushed to have an open forum where all sides of the issue could be presented to the students and the public. A forum was planned and speakers were selected, but the forum never took place because the administration was afraid the media would come back and resume their reign of terror. What we did get was a Speaker Series devoted exclusively to issues of First Amendment rights and

Silencing Dissent

The catchphrase "political correctness" is wonderfully efficient in discrediting (and trivializing) commitment to equality of results. It converts all criticism of oppressive practices into anti-democratic, even totalitarian, thought control, and inclusive pedagogy encouraging critical thought about accepted wisdom into indoctrination for closed-mindedness. At the same time, minority activism against majoritarian "truths" claiming universal appeal and neutral origins and impacts is converted from political dissent into a moralizing crusade.

—**Sheila McIntyre**, "Backlash Against Equality: The 'Tyranny' of the 'Politically Correct,'" 38 *McGill Law Journal* 1 (April, 1993).

The Siege of the Feminists

Anyone who has spent time in a women's studies department knows just how ridiculous is the currently fashionable notion that universities have been captured by feminist scholars and their acolytes. I remember feeling besieged—but not by sympathizers. There were people who made rude comments about women's studies at official faculty dinners, women's studies majors who had difficulty getting into classes in other departments, tussles with departments that refused to tenure scholars who just happened to belong to the Committee on Degrees in Women's Studies.

—**Deborah Cohen**, "An intellectual home," *Women's Review of Books*, February 1994.

censorship—very safe topics under the circumstances—which made us look as if we had indeed attempted censorship and were now trying to redeem ourselves.

Students informed me that at least two of their teachers who had cried "censorship" from the beginning were lecturing their students about it and making no attempt to present the other side. They made it clear to students that I was personally responsible for what had happened. Their emotionally charged lectures turned many students against me, and I couldn't walk from one building to the next without hearing people call me names. One day the English professor (who had also planned the lecture series) stood right outside the door to my classroom as he ranted and raved about censorship within earshot of my students. If reporters and learned scholars want to find "thought police" activities, they should look no further than these two professors. As far as I am concerned, any professor who uses his or her power in the classroom to brainwash students with his own slant on an issue does not belong in the classroom. Our job as teachers is to present all sides of an issue, and if we don't understand all sides, we should attempt to find out about them.

In an effort to explain some nontraditional ways of seeing art to the faculty at the campus, I distributed a portion of John Berger's book, *Ways of Seeing*, and invited people to read the article and discuss it with me. When Berger wrote this book in 1973, he began a revolution in the ways we analyze art, advertising and popular images in our culture. Berger looks at representations of the female figure as the eternal object of the male gaze, and shows various paintings of naked or nude females. My attempts to increase people's awareness of how women are represented in art had an unexpected result. Two men on campus—one faculty member and one maintenance person—filed a complaint of sexual harassment with the Affirmative Action Office. They claimed I was harassing them with pictures of nude women. I was amazed at how these men reacted to an attempt to start an intellectual discussion about art. Of course, there was no foundation for their complaint and it was dismissed, but the unexpected backlash from these co-workers added to the stress of the experience.

While there was a group of strong supporters who stood by my side through the difficult times, they never really had an opportunity to make their views public. The reporters weren't interested in interviewing people who agreed with me, and the administration couldn't face having an open forum. While a few people wrote letters to the editor of the local newspaper, and the Commission for Women sent a letter of support to the campus, for the most part I had to stand in the media's spotlight alone, the target of everyone's abuse. By singling me out for derision, the media successfully silenced other voices, just as the males silenced the females in my classroom with their sexist remarks. After people saw what had happened to me when I brought a touchy subject out of hiding, they knew the spotlight could quickly turn on them if they sided with me publicly. The few supporters whose voices did reach the media were given little time or space to explain their views, while the opposition seemed to have unlimited time and space. Because the media had distorted the truth and colored the news with derision and opinions based on hearsay, it created a climate of fear which silenced people rather than fostering open discussion. While reporters berated the University for not providing a forum of open discussion, they made it impossible to discuss ideas in any intelligent way. They wanted the public to understand their interpretation of what happened and no other.

When Imre Horvath approached me almost a year after the incident and explained that Manifold Productions was working on a documentary for PBS investigating stories about "political correctness" at several major universities, I thought that I had finally found the proper forum to express my viewpoints. He assured me and the Public Relations Office that the documentary would be objective and portray our side of the story in a sympathetic light, so I agreed to do the interview. I should have realized when Horvath said he was investigating "political correctness" that he had no intention of presenting an objective view of what had happened. The result was a documentary called *Campus Culture Wars*. While the documentary focused on several issues of racial and sexual discrimination, the producer's sympathy—and consequently the viewers' sympathy—was never with the people who had been the targets of the discrimination. Alan Dershowitz was called upon to comment on several of the stories, indicating that the producer considered him to be the resident expert through whose eyes everyone would understand the dangers of "political correctness." He gave a conservative focus to the documentary which was supposed to be objective. When he said, "You have to be ready to deal with Goya's nude and other offensive material," he implied that I was unable to cope with pictures of naked women, and that I found them offensive. It is not the painting which is offensive; what is offensive is the lack of respect many men have for women in art and in life. The end result of this video was to inflame people about issues deemed "politically correct" and to prevent minorities and women from achieving equality.

REVERBERATIONS

In late fall of 1992 I learned through the grapevine that two art history professors from University Park had received a grant from the College of Arts and Architecture to organize a symposium to provide a forum where concerned individuals could explore the aesthetic, political, moral, social, and legal issues raised by the removal of the *Naked Maja* from the classroom. Discussion of the issues was supposed to serve as a departure point for examining censorship, pornography, and gender equality in the larger context of the arts in society. No doubt they intended to salvage some of the University's reputation.

I was very interested in the symposium because I was still looking for a forum in which to express my own ideas, so I called one of the men on the phone and asked him to send me information about it. At that time they had all their plans made, speakers lined up, title selected, and program in place. It was clear to me by our conversation that they had never considered asking anyone from the campus to represent our views. When I received the tentative program and looked at the title, "Sex, Censorship, and the University Classroom: Goya's *Maja* Maligned?" and saw the words "Censored? Censored?" across the top, I knew that there was no way the classroom climate topic would get a fair chance.

Someone from our campus attended the symposium and reported that Professor Anderson opened the session by quoting negative news articles that were loaded with sarcasm and ridicule, and the audience responded with giggles and laughter. A huge picture of the *Naked Maja* was projected on the wall behind the speakers. This is how the tone was set for an intellectual discussion of important issues. Dr. Garoian, a performance artist, ended the symposium with a 45-

minute performance consisting of three segments. In the first scene, a video of the slaughtering of a cow served as a metaphor to show how Goya's painting has been butchered and how people slaughter each other every day. The second part showed a naked woman posed as the subject of the Goya painting while words such as "cunt" flashed over her face as she told her sad tale. In the last segment, Garoian told of his first childhood experience with pornography. Although there were some very educational presentations made that day, the overall tone of the symposium was not amenable to objective discussion of ideas about classroom climate.

In a letter to the editor of the *Collegian*, some women graduate students at University Park wrote that the symposium

> distorted the reasons why an English instructor asked that Goya's *Nude Maja* be removed from her classroom. Since the incident first was made public, people have dismissed the validity of the instructor's complaint: That no one should have to teach in an environment that victimizes the instructor. The symposium continued that dismissal by focusing on censorship, which once again silenced the discussion of the most important issues—the classroom climate for men and women, students and teachers, and the exploitation of women....Although there is nothing inherently wrong with the *Nude Maja*, there is something wrong with a society that sexually exploits women and then negates their objections to the exploitation. And there is something wrong with a university that tells women they are "imagining things" or in this case "censoring" Goya, instead of encouraging unrestricted dialogue about gender issues. After all, the *Maja* incident is an issue of gender, an issue of the power imbalance between men and women in our patriarchal society—that's what the symposium failed to address; that's how women's experiences are silenced....We will not be silenced. Through speaking out, our experiences must and will be validated—and a crucial dialogue that failed can, once again, take place.

This letter assured me that there were other people out there who understood the issue. It is young women like them who are our hope for the future. They are brave enough to speak out in spite of the risks. In closing, I would like to stress some important points that need to be considered:

1. I never filed a formal complaint with the Affirmative Action Office claiming that I was a victim of sexual harassment. As a member of the Liaison Committee of the Penn State Commission for Women, I expressed a concern about classroom climate to the Campus CEO; this concern was shared by a considerable number of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. The concern was delivered to the CEO by the committee, and the CEO responded promptly to our request.

2. Certain individuals in the media have assumed the right to define the issues and deliver the news with whatever slant or bias they choose, pursuing people mercilessly and grilling them to get what they want, and then selecting only those comments that serve their own purpose. By singling me out for ridicule, the media tried to silence women's voices. The tragedy is that most people believe what they read in newspapers or see on TV shows, especially PBS documentaries. If the media won't treat a topic like the classroom climate issue as a subject for serious discussion, how will people ever learn about such topics? When will the "teachable moment" come?

3. While many men are reluctant to have male nudity displayed in public for females to evaluate and comment on, they are adamant that women must continually submit to this treatment. Most professional women want to be respected for their ideas, not accepted or rejected on the basis of appearance. When an educational process is derailed by sexist comments, the atmosphere is polluted and learning stops. Women have the right to work and to learn in an atmosphere free of sex bias. Allowing male students to ridicule women's bodies diminishes all women and prevents them from developing the self-respect and self-confidence that they need to succeed in a difficult world.

4. A professor should have the right to monitor the climate in his or her classroom without interference from outside influences, just as she has the responsibility to ensure that all students have equal access to an education. While I have tremendous respect for art and get considerable enjoyment from looking at it, as an English instructor I am more concerned in my developmental English classes that my students get the self-confidence that they need to succeed in college.

5. I believe in democracy for all. I am opposed to censorship. Writers and artists should be able to express their views on any subject. In my Women's Studies classes I often display and discuss much more controversial paintings than Goya's *Maja Desnuda*. I don't find this painting offensive. I do believe that there is a proper place to put artwork on display, and it is not in a general classroom. How many classrooms have you been in lately that have pictures of naked women on the wall? How many have pictures of naked men? Could it be censorship that has kept pictures of nude men off the walls? Just as artists should have the right to deal with whatever topics they want, viewers should have some choice about what they look at. My goal from the beginning was to expand the art collection and label the paintings so they could serve an educational purpose. If there has been any censorship in this incident, it has been of my viewpoints—not of Goya's painting.

Finally I would say to Jennifer from Calumet City, Illinois, if you think what I have done is the action of a weak woman, a victim, you are sadly mistaken. Women who speak out risk everything. It is much easier to suffer in silence or just deal with the problem in the class and not disturb the world. Most women have been doing this for years. I personally have had enough of this double standard that won't go away. I want to be respected as a professional teacher, and I want my students to respect each other and themselves. If that makes me an object for ridicule, then people will just have to laugh. My conscience is clear and if I had to, I would do it again.

Nancy Stumhofer teaches English at Pennsylvania State University's Schuylkill Campus.

WRITE FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE!

This newsletter needs your writing to exist. We want to create a debate and discussion of ideas which will interest our members. Tell us what's happening on your campus. Give us your perspective on recent controversies. We're looking for essays, campus reports, media analyses, book reviews, letters, and thoughts about the future of TDC. Please send submissions to: **Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204**. (For longer essays, please include a copy on disk saved in text/ASCII format.) To be a part of our next issue, please send your essay or contact us by August 30.

Figuring Out Our Public Spheres

David Simpson

I THINK THAT WE might now be at the point from which we look back to the canon debates and the culture wars as the golden age of the late 20th century (literary) academy in the United States. Was this the last, best place to be? Banging away at our colleagues about which books we ought to teach (Milton or Morrison) and how we ought to teach them (human spirit or humanist ideology), it was very easy for us to behave as if we were still in control of our collective fate, and even to achieve some results that seemed to support this belief. The presence on the scene of Lynne Cheney's NEH, with its melodramatic effort at the micromanagement of American culture and higher education, presented us with an almost Arthurian moral clarity: it was the enemy, and we were the knights in shining armor. Suddenly, it seemed possible to be sure of the differences between the progressives and the reactionaries. College professors were once again able to imagine themselves in the front line for social change. First the classroom, then the world. It was, perhaps, the last expression of what we often refer to, in shorthand, as "sixties" activism.

And, indeed, the world seemed interested. The National Association of Scholars played its role to the max, always willing to come up with the hysterical headline. Our side, of course, looked much better, and when the histories are written the patience of Gerald Graff and others in providing a reasoned and historical account of the culture wars will look, I'd guess, even more admirable than it already does. Sir Gerald was widely held to have bested Sir Allan on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, and we can all be happy about that. But my sense is that the game has changed, and that different beasts now roam the land, beasts with no name and no fixed form. Gerald Graff himself made a very important point when he wrote, in his account of the debate in *Beyond the Culture Wars*, that the experience of television caused him to think of Allan Bloom "less as an ideological enemy than as a fellow intellectual in a common predicament: how to clarify a debate about relativism, nihilism, and other abstractions not commonly presented on daytime network TV." Even if they had ended up agreeing, who else would have been convinced, and of what?

For Bloom and Graff, as Graff realized, had much more in common with each other than either did with their host or her audience. And this realization perfectly specifies the fantasy dimension of the ongoing debate, which still leaves academics in the hot seat, and in complete control. All of this does indeed interact with a public sphere, and every department has its stories showing when and how. The battle over the Stanford humanities core curriculum made the national press, and was variously replicated in different ways in different places. My university experienced a local incident over the teaching of unfamiliar, "multicultural" books in a course titled "Masterpieces of American Literature," and another when the newspapers inquired whether a course titled "Madonna Undressed" was what parents were happy to be paying for. We scholars love to be or seem controversial, but we are serving two masters. We cannot resist the sexy course or paper titles, the ones that get attention (as they do from someone in the press at every MLA conference); and when they do, we promptly take refuge in the rhetoric of scholarly seriousness.

But there is another dimension to the public sphere, and one to which we have paid little attention, and are not at all in control of. Higher education in general is under inspection if not attack; and the research mission in particular and above all in the public sector is its most scrutinized component. Here in Colorado, we have demographic and economic growth (around 6% this year), unemployment running at around 5% and thus significantly below the national average, and, especially along the front range of the Rockies between Fort Collins and Colorado Springs, one of the most flexible and highly educated workforces in the nation. Despite these apparently favorable circumstances, we are experiencing intense pressure from a State Legislature that wants to know, quite reasonably, how its tax dollars are being spent and to what purpose. Its members and their public do of course notice when we make the newspapers for teaching Madonna (and as we rush to the defense of the Madonna industry we should recall that we are trading in something of the charisma that Veblen and others have identified as the humanist academy's best defense, so that we had better have something good to put in its place). But the legislators are even more interested in how much time we spend teaching, what the value of our "research" might be, and whether the time-honored tradition of the sabbatical is something we (or they) can continue to afford. In other words, if we restrict ourselves to arguing about what to teach, or whether to teach in new or received ways, we will miss the history that is happening around us, and threatening to modify

NEWSCLIPS

Deconstructing Lincoln

"Deconstruction" has become a label used to dismiss any critical interpretation, even when it bears little resemblance to the theories of Derrida or de Man. A recent speech by David Lehman at Wittenberg University, described in an exchange in the *Chicago Tribune* (February 11 and March 29), reveals the dangers of Lehman's exclusively traditional approach to great works.

In Lehman's book, *Signs of the Times*, he offered a mock-deconstructive reading of the Gettysburg Address which saw phrases like "our fathers brought forth" and "conceived in liberty" as a patriarchal appropriation of female procreative power. "All men are created equal," according to Lehman's deconstructionist, "excludes women and other 'marginalized' figures" and "the document therefore promotes something other than full equality."

Lehman reports his surprise when "bearded" "Berkeley-trained" Wittenburg English professor Robert Leigh Davis defended this "deconstructive" approach. Lehman reports about Davis, "Why, he wanted to know, was it all right for me to deconstruct Paul de Man's pro-Nazi journalism—and why wasn't it all right for others to do the same to the Gettysburg Address? I asked the professor whether he really saw no difference between Lincoln's great speech and De Man's crude journalism." Here we see Lehman's double standard of historical analysis: a "great speech" does not need any interpretation. In his book, Lehman "deconstructed" Paul de Man's later writings in light of his anti-Semitic journalism. Why, then, is it impermissable to analyze Lincoln's speech in light of his racist statements in other speeches, which might show what Lincoln really meant by equality? If anything, the latter approach is much more plausible, since Lincoln's racism bears an obvious relation to his invocation of equality, while Lehman never established any link between de Man's anti-Semitism and his literary theory.

Lehman particularly objected to Davis' suggestion that Lincoln was a racist. Citing the Emancipation Proclamation, Lehman asks, "Had Lincoln turned from the great emancipator into a racist by one of those deconstructive sleights-of-hand that make a thing merge with its own opposite?" The answer is that Lin-

NEWSCLIPS

coln never needed sleights-of-hand to look like a racist—he has always been one. His speeches explicitly contain unmistakably racist statements, such as: "There is a natural disgust in the minds of nearly all white people, to the idea of an indiscriminate amalgamation of the white and black races." If we want to understand what Lincoln means by "all men are created equal," we must also understand the racism of Lincoln and his times. One can understand the racist background to the Gettysburg Address and still admire the greatness of Lincoln's speech.

Davis reports that at Wittenburg, "students and faculty alike resisted Lehman's claim that the masterpieces of Western culture—unlike all other writings—somehow transcend history and rise above irrelevant (and irreverent) questions of race, gender and class." But Lehman wants to forbid debate about the subject: "We can either read the Gettysburg Address or we can deconstruct it—there isn't enough time to do both." As Davis notes, "Lehman urges us not to read Lincoln but to 'memorize' him. And to think otherwise, to believe otherwise, is deconstruction."

Lehman's reaction to Robert Davis shows his real concern is not that leftists will remove the great works of our culture from the classroom, but that they might fail to show uncritical admiration for these writings. In Lehman's eyes, any criticism of great American leaders is unpatriotic, and any debate about the meaning of Lincoln's words would distract students from the far more important task of memorization.

Stolen Feminism

Clark University philosopher Christina Hoff Sommers, author of the forthcoming *Who Stole Feminism?*, calls it a "disgrace to the profession" that there is "a dearth of dispassionate appraisal of basic feminist positions, due in part to the reluctance of skeptical philosophers to face the kind of *ad hominem* opprobrium and political censure that feminist philosophers too often mete out to their critics."

But in the recent *Esquire* "Do-me feminism" article, Sommers is quoted as saying: "There are a lot homely women in women's studies. Preaching these antimale, antisex sermons is a way for them to compensate for various heartaches—they're just mad at the beautiful girls."

the whole apparatus of higher education. We might, in other words, find ourselves teaching Madonna a great deal more often than we want to.

Roughly 3 out of 4 Coloradans recently surveyed think that the primary mission of the research university should be teaching. Theirs is not an informed opinion: such opinions never are. But the figures, we may be sure, will remain to haunt us. It does not matter that, for instance, the Boulder campus of the state university—the "flagship" campus—is an unusually lean and efficient operation, generating huge numbers of federal and tuition dollars to offset a state contribution of merely 14% to its operating budget, achieving a higher than average four-year graduation rate, and functioning very well with a student: faculty ratio much higher than many peer institutions. We do not have to offer incentives, as some of our peers are reported as doing, to lure "top" faculty "back" to the classroom. Almost all our full professors teach undergraduates most of the time. There is very little waste in our system, though of course there is always room for improvement in various kinds of efficiency. What, then, is the task facing concerned faculty in institutions such as ours?

Part of the task must continue to be the in-house debate about what and how to teach, about "political correctness," about what is academically important and what is not. This in-house debate, as we know, makes it to the outside world (and sometimes to the out-house). But at the present moment this can only be *part* of our concern. We must also make the case for the organic relation between teaching and "research," for the importance of graduate education to the quality of the new generation in all of its separate spheres, and for the economic benefit of a healthy science and technology based research operation. It is especially vital that we make this attempt if we are managed, as many universities now are managed, by a higher administration not itself principally composed of academics like ourselves.

The task of representing to the public just what we do and why it might be worth doing all too often falls to those least qualified for carrying it out. And those of us who are qualified often do it badly or not at all. It is not uncommon for university presidents and chancellors to be selected from a pool of transient individuals who have neither the values or skills traditional to the academy (in teaching and research) nor the talents of thoroughly trained and experienced corporate executives. Even if they have academic ambitions, they have no time to preserve them and exercise them, such are the demands of the job. We are left, in other words, with the worst of both worlds: with a managerial subculture qualified neither to explain why it matters to have, for instance, a Ph.D. in English or History, nor to attempt a radical rationalization of the academic workplace on corporate-industrial principles. No wonder the public wonders what we do.

No doubt most of us would wince at the second of the above alternatives: probably no one wants Lee Iacocca for president of their university. We'd prefer one of our own. My guess is that unless we succeed in getting more of our own, then we'll see more and more Iacocca types. And would this be self-evidently a terrible thing—especially given how poorly "our own" are doing—if the best of corporate intelligence should consist in an honest attempt to understand what the product is, and why it is worth having? If the costs of a college education continue to go up and up at a rate above inflation, more and more people are going to want to know what it is that they are buying. The answer is complex, and someone with a complex mind had better make the case. They are buying charisma, symbolized in the cap and gown ritual of graduation that marks the receivers of degrees as members of a clerisy, however eroded its spiritual identity might now seem to be. From the humanities, they are buying access to culture, to a traditional knowledge that we can never quite explain fully in instrumental terms but which the public, fortunately for us, continues to value.

But they are also buying the basic skills of reading, writing and critical thinking (and here is where Madonna comes in) that are important to both their cultural *and* their economic well-being. College graduates still make more money than those whose education finished with high school. So that we are, as Bourdieu and his followers remind us, in the business of accreditation, of separating out the few from the many. This is a neutral or even conservative activity, and it is represented (though seldom actually enacted) in our tradition of giving out grades. It is the other end of the spectrum from the 'changing the world' explanations of some radical teachers, but it is fundamental to the operations of the institutions within which they themselves work, and it must be recognized as such whether or not it meets with their approval.

Arnold Weber, President of Northwestern University, suggests (and I agree with him) that our major enemy is our own collective fantasy that we can do it all, solve the world's problems both culturally and technologically, and change everything for the better. Then we feel ourselves so important in general that we cannot say what we do in particular. Or, alternatively, we imagine our-

selves so helpless that we cannot think about our effects at all. We are not in the business of producing pure knowledge for its own sake, but neither are we simply a vehicle for technology transfer. We in the humanities are committed to the dissemination of basic skills, directly keyed to a workplace, but we also deal intensively with the understanding of the difficult and inexact languages that compose "culture."

We need this complex information before we can have any constructive discussion of such issues as faculty workload, or the teaching-research relation, or the "value" of a college education. A member of the Board of Regents governing my university floored me with his incomprehension of "research" in the humanities. It took me some time to realize that he had a point: the term "research" is a scientifically or technologically applied word arousing expectations of a clear outcome. Scholarship and publication in humanities subjects have something in common with what goes on in a laboratory, and in happier times we humanists have been content to describe ourselves as engaged in "research" and have marched under the banner of its privileges. But now we must work harder to explain that both scholarship and (scientific) research have as much to do with the training of students, and thus with "teaching," as they do with hard and fast outcomes.

Activism in today's university still is and must continue to be lobbying for and introducing different books to teach in different ways. But this alone will not get us through the next decade in good institutional shape. The effort will have to be conducted on behalf of the university as a whole, and without reproducing or reinventing internal turf wars between, for instance, arts and sciences and professional schools. One of the most positive developments on my campus has been the evolution of an energetic Council of Chairs where there has been no whisper of disagreement over, for example, the different teaching loads in History and Physics, or other such familiar antagonisms, but where the common interests of all faculty and students have been the objects of attention.

Today's research university is a very complex community, some parts of which are totally and others not at all reliant upon tuition dollars, with the different parts producing different results. Someone has to explain how and why and to what degree this collection of operations is and is not a whole. As higher education continues to undergo close scrutiny, whether from trustees and fee-paying parents or from state legislators, faculty could do worse than try to take back some control over the marketing of the university, and thus over its future. The culture wars are not over. But unless we can break out of our departments and address a different and urgent agenda, we may lose our place in the debate. I began my career in a Cambridge college where the assembled faculty decided on everything from the question of investing in South Africa to the membership of the college gardens committee (on which, I might add, I proudly served!). Such rampant democracy was, as may be imagined, an invitation to considerable self-importance and much hot air, but it was a democracy. I now occupy a position in a large public research university where almost no one above the Deans ever consults the faculty about anything, and with results that can often seem disastrous. This is the other extreme. Somewhere between, there can surely be a mutually supportive and informative relation between faculty and administration, and there has to be, if we are going to survive. Faculty at Yale and Columbia have in recent years discovered that they do have a role to play in deciding the course of their own institutions.

Today the humanist intellectual usually gains the attention of a public sphere at the expense of, or in spite of, his or her institution. We want to go directly to a general reader or audience outside the university, where we can have an "effect." Thus we pass by the complex needs and urgent situation of our collective identity, the university, even if we enhance its reputation by using its address. This is a mistake.

I am not invoking some vapid notion of "institutional loyalty," a largely meaningless phrase for a community divided so often against itself. I am arguing for a new interest in *understanding* and explaining the institution, on the part of those best equipped to do so—its faculty. This task has a traditional academic dimension (evident in the work of Bourdieu, John Guillory, Evan Watkins and others), but also a practical, everyday component, albeit one that is impeded by the division of labor and vested interest *between* departments, schools and colleges, at the expense of any cultivation of collective self-understanding. Only when we attempt this understanding will we find out who we are in relation to a public whose hostile reputation may well be no more than a convenient fiction used by administrators to excuse their own incompetence or insulation. Instead of having them tell us how things play in Peoria, let's go see. But before we go, let's figure out what we're doing and why we're doing it. Ask not what your university can do for you, nor even what you can do for it; ask first, what "it" is.

David Simpson teaches English at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

NEWSCLIPS

Conservative Sex

(From the September-October 1993 issue of *Society*)

"It is no coincidence that women are more inclined to shop than men, and men are more inclined to play football than women."—Herbert London.

"Traditional sexual stereotypes in appearance and role have been largely repudiated [because] both males and females look like young Mick Jaggers....this compromise is not without its risks. Sexual cues are necessary for the propagation of the species."

—Herbert London.

"The pleasure a woman gets with clitoral stimulation is comparable to the pleasure a pre-pubescent boy gets with stimulation of his non-ejaculating penis."—Robin Fox.

"The logic of this new, presumably permanent, conflict between men and women, one based upon gender differences rather than inequities, leads directly to homosexuality."—Irving Louis Horowitz.

Duke Bashing

Imagine an English department where undergraduate majors increased by 70% in four years, where graduate applications tripled, where 800 professors applied for a recent faculty opening, where there is a required "Major Writers" course on Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope, and where faculty are now regarded as among the best in the country.

Imagine an English department where one observer "was consistently impressed by the quality of the teaching: the spectacle of good teachers interacting with bright, well-prepared students, students who gave every indication of feeling free to speak their minds."

Most people would call this a tremendous success story. But instead, this English department has been reviled as the symbol of everything wrong with American universities, a place where professors "compact the world's great literature to fit their coarse and ham-fisted political framework," a place where "the Bolsheviks have already taken over," where the effort to revitalize the English department was condemned as "trendy, faddish, doctrinaire, academically unsound and rather absurd" with an "entrenched tenured Marxist influence."

This is the Duke English Department,

NEWSCLIPS

attacked most recently in the national conservative newspaper *Campus* using a just-released 1992 external review of Duke's program which criticized it not for providing a poor education, but for failing to serve a job market which is supposedly hostile to literary theory and nontraditional approaches to literature.

The report noted, "The existing program fails to mandate the broad grounding in English that is still expected at comparable schools and by many future employers." It is disturbing to think that curriculum decisions might be dictated by job markets rather than intellectual excellence. But it also shows how little the "multicultural revolution" has changed English departments across the country, as an article in *Policy Review* (Winter 1994) points out: "There's a dirty little secret in the multicultural halls of American universities: dead white males are alive and well."

The attack on Duke in the Spring 1994 issue of *Campus* contends that "many of Duke's English graduate students are today unable to find jobs in the profession," in part because of the "taint" of being from Duke. This is a highly deceptive assertion, since English Ph.D.s everywhere face a competitive job market and Duke students have done better than graduates of most other schools. But *Campus* warns us that "the outlook does not look bright for most students earning Ph.D.s from Duke" because "the market exists mainly for instructors who are more traditionally trained in the field of literary theory." The Market, it appears, is the god which Duke fails to worship.

Campus criticizes Duke's English program because "English majors need take only three courses in traditional areas and may take the remaining five in areas such as 'queer theory,' 'feminist criticism,' of African-American literature." In other words, the "problem" here is that students are forced to take "only" three traditional classes and "may" take some non-traditional courses if they wish. The "problem" is that most colleges only want traditional teachers, and not someone who has explored non-traditional topics. The "problem" is not that Duke is "trendy," but that it diverges from the dominant trend in English toward traditional approaches. As Katharine Bartlett observed in 1991, "At Duke, courses on Shakespeare, Milton, and other 'traditional' liberal arts

The Mess at Iowa State

Jacqueline Smetak

I THINK THAT WE can all agree that colleges and universities should be sites for the free exchange of ideas. I think that we can also agree that when this exchange becomes difficult or impossible because of repression or a breakdown in the normal rules of civility that this is bad. But what happens when the freedom to exchange ideas becomes the only issue, shutting down any serious discussion or analysis of what might really be going on? Such is the situation at Iowa State University in Ames, which made national news in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article on December 1, 1993.

Christie Pope, a white woman teaching an African-American history course, was confronted in class by DeAngelo X, a member of the Nation of Islam, who escalated his confrontations to include urging a Jihad. Dr. Pope, and many other people, took this to be a death threat. When he called her a racist and a liar, he was expelled from class. Other black students protested, sat in during the class, and demanded Dr. Pope's removal. They claimed that she was disrespectful, that she had attacked the student's religious beliefs, and that complaints about her had been circulating for years. Although the *Chronicle* did not report on everything that happened, it said enough. It also nicely framed the issue—at Iowa State and four other schools—in terms of Afrocentric students versus non-Afrocentric teachers.

At Iowa State, however, it became a matter of academic freedom and freedom of speech. At least this was the position taken by all the major players—Dr. Pope, the Black Student Alliance, the ISU *Daily*, and the Administration. Unfortunately, the situation became so polarized that freedom, academic and otherwise, quickly turned into a zero sum game. Any freedom granted Dr. Pope took freedom away from the students and vice versa. For Martin Jischke, University President, the prerogatives of the professional academic to set standards and run a class were inviolate. On the other hand, he also saw the very articulate points raised by the students. So much, as one faculty member commented, for leadership.

In essence, Jischke endorsed a rather authoritarian model of education while also supporting the students on the receiving end of all this authority. What he neglected to mention was that initially Dr. Pope had been left to swing in the breeze. The threat was ignored. The Administration readmitted DeAngelo X to the class without first consulting with either Dr. Pope or the head of the History Department. Protesters were allowed to conduct a sit-in for at least a week because the Administration forgot, or pointedly ignored, its own regulation that no student could attend any class without first being properly admitted.

What was really interesting about the whole mess, however, was how anxious people were to hide behind the First Amendment as if what went on in History 353 had nothing to do with racial issues at the University.

The Administration has been putting a lot of effort into recruiting minority students, but it can't seem to hang on to them. While two-thirds of white students graduate within six years, only one-third of black students do and there doesn't seem to be any correlation between this high drop-out rate and either academic ability or academic achievement. The kids just out and out don't like the place.

Of course, objectively speaking who would? Stuck out in the middle of hundreds of miles of Iowa corn, Iowa State has never quite shaken its traditional cow college ambiance. In Campus Town there's not much to do except get drunk (which the Ames police discourage with Puritanical glee) or shop for t-shirts. One black student, bailing out during her senior year, told the *Daily* she couldn't stand it any more. The place was so white.

Actually, "white" is not the word for it. Ames manages to combine all the disadvantages of a clannish small town with all the disadvantages of a mid-sized city. Dull, conservative, non-intellectual, and proudly behind the times (up until 1970,

The Political Correctness Wars

The way language has generally been used within the debates over political correctness is worth contemplating. Many opponents of political correctness utilize military imagery and various calls to arms in an attempt to awaken people's sympathy and stir them to "battle" against the "enemy."...It is hard to resist the temptation to speculate that there may be some psychosexual collusion between the nature of the conservative ideology represented in the attack on political correctness, a masculinist tendency toward aggression and conquest, and a fear of losing control and power. But to engage in such speculation is itself, I suppose, to risk being labeled "politically correct," so I desist.

—Landon Beyer, "The Curriculum, Social Context, and 'Political Correctness,'" *Journal of General Education*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1994).

schools sent elementary students home for lunch because the schools weren't in the business of providing day care for mothers who shouldn't be working anyway), the town encourages in people a sudden taste for yard work. Add this to the problems at the University and the possibilities could be nasty. While enrollment rose and then held steady at around 25,000, the number of faculty and support staff steadily dropped. ISU has nearly 400 fewer faculty but 8,000 more students than it did 15 years ago. Virtually every class offered is overenrolled. Classrooms are so crowded with furniture, not to mention students sitting on the floor, that moving around is difficulty, and the Registrar's Office reports more than 20,000 unmet requests for courses every semester.

Black students, citing rising tuition at this very expensive school (most are from out of state), are furious because they are not getting the attention they feel they've paid for or were promised when they were recruited. One of the demands vis-a-vis Pope's class was that the professor should allow more in-class discussion of the type someone somewhere apparently led them to expect from college. Enrollment in the class, however, was nearly 100.

It seems to me that the underlying issues were better articulated at Berkeley thirty years ago although that, too, occurred under the rubric of "Free Speech." The real issue was alienation in what the university's president termed a "knowledge factory." The students did not appreciate being called a product nor being treated like one. These days, however, they are customers—or at least that's what George Jackson, Assistant Vice President and head of Minority Student Affairs called them—until the Administration decides to talk about faculty productivity, when the students revert to being products.

No wonder they're pissed off. They keep getting flipped between being customers for whom services are woefully inadequate and the end result of an assembly line. And judging from the letters and essays that members of BSA submitted to the ISU *Daily*, they were right to complain about the quality of their education. Their communication and critical thinking skills, like those of too many ISU students, left much to be desired.

Unfortunately, in the process of airing their grievances, no matter how badly stated or unfounded these criticisms may have been, they were given the clear message that their complaints violated someone else's academic freedom. Nor was this the first time they'd been told this. When these students complained about being harassed and called names, the Administration, instead of citing standards of civility which should exist at any school (and no, I'm not talking about speech codes), flapped about the First Amendment Rights of those who were doing the name-calling and harassing. When these students raised Cain over a university food worker with KKK and swastika tattoos, the Administration—rather than being honest and telling these kids that firing a 55-year-old mentally retarded state employee working under a union contract because of decorations he had acquired as a teenager would be fairly sticky—cited (you guessed it) his First Amendment Rights.

The Administration was not protecting anyone's freedom to speak. What it was doing was covering its ass and encouraging a lack of respect in these black students for everyone's rights, including their own. They are now convinced that going through the system cannot work.

The free exchange of ideas and information is essential in an academic setting. Howeve, academic freedom does not—nor is it intended to—grant teachers the right to say or do whatever they please. Rather, it is intended to protect teachers from undue interference from those outside their profession.

But to haul in the First Amendment as the first line of defense in any disagreement, as Iowa State has done, is dangerous. It is dangerous because it not only cheapens the concept of free speech, but also because it was used to shut people up and stop discussion rather than promote it. I believe one of the tasks of Teachers for a Democratic Culture should be to distinguish between situations in which academic freedom and freedom of speech are an issue and those in which they are not. And people who cynically use the First Amendment to obfuscate other, equally serious problems should be condemned.

Jacqueline Smetak lives in Ames, Iowa.

Preaching to the Culturally Converted

The grave danger of the current state of war about values, goals, policies, and curricula is narrowness, rigidity, and reductionism—which result from the statement and restatement of positions that are closed to exploratory analytical contact with the positions of the other side. On the Right and on the Left, there is far too much preaching to the already converted, and it is disturbing to imagine that this might continue unabated, with no end in sight, and with the true exercise of critical consciousness blocked.

—William Cain, Editor's Introduction to *Teaching the Conflicts: Gerald Graff, Curricular Reform, and the Culture Wars* (Garland, 1993).

NEWSCLIPS

subjects are not under siege; courses on such subjects as Marxism, women's studies, and Afro-American literature are."

The same issue of *Campus* features an interview with Duke English professor Victor Strandberg, who—we are told by *Campus*—"managed to survive the politically correct reign of former Duke English Chairman Stanley Fish." But Strandberg has high praise for Fish, calling him "fair-minded and open-minded" and applauding his work as chair. The interviewer even accuses Strandberg of "being evasive" when he fails to acknowledge any serious problems with the English Department.

Former Duke President Keith Brodie has noted, "At Duke the curriculum is not an either/or proposition as some critics have suggested. Our students are studying both the best in traditional literature and the best in emerging areas of scholarship such as African-American literature, ethnic studies, women's studies, and others." But now we learn that this is not enough. Instead, the duty of Duke's English Department is said to be to follow the market demands of traditionalist English departments, to become an academic assembly-line where students are uncritically fed Great Books and the fundamentals of literary history in order to get them jobs where they can replicate this "education."

Liberal Harassment

At Southern University, a student charged administrators with sexual harassment for telling him concerning his project to "stay on top of it because some students fall through the cracks." The student felt that this was a sexual innuendo because "God had given him a vision" that he was being harassed.

At Eastern Illinois University, music professor Douglas DiBianco was accused of sexual and cultural harassment because he criticized Christianity and talked about phallic symbols. Kristin Adams said she felt "culturally harassed" in his non-Western music class. According to Adams, DiBianco "slammed Christianity and other religions and said he preferred Buddhism." Adams also accused DiBianco of using works of art by Robert Mapplethorpe, referring to Pinocchio's nose as a phallic symbol, and describing Snow White as "an anal-

NEWSCLIPS

retentive, domineering woman."

A photograph of a topless woman feeding spaghetti to a man in bed was recently censored from Melvin Mencher's bestselling journalism textbook, *News Reporting and Writing*. This photograph (along with a photo of a bulldog sitting on an American flag) led to the firing of University of Southwestern Louisiana yearbook editor Jeffrey Gremillion when it appeared in 1991, which caused Mencher to include the photos in his chapter on "Taste—Defining the Appropriate." But Mencher's editor at Brown & Benchmark Publishers asked five journalism professors to review the photos, and four of them thought the spaghetti photo was distasteful and feared it might lead to sexual harassment charges.

Ohio State English professor and Vietnam veteran Phoebe Spinrad complained to the U.S. Labor Department that the university was not in compliance with the 1974 Vietnam-Era Veterans Readjustment Act, which puts Vietnam veterans into the category of oppressed minorities. Spinrad claimed that she was being harassed because there were anti-military opinions posted on faculty doors: "Imagine the outcry if there were pictured watermelon-eating blacks or bare-breasted women from auto calendars on the walls. Talk about hostile environment!" The Labor Department intervened and ordered Ohio State to stop this "harassment" of veterans. One wonders if an anti-war veteran can now harass herself with her own opinions.

Proposition 42 and the SAT

The recent minor revisions of the SAT have alarmed students and resulted in huge profits for SAT study classes, but they do not change the basic flaws in the test or the inappropriate ways it is used to deny educational opportunities to students who do poorly on it. The recent book, *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*, points out how the SAT is used to deny scholarships to women, even though they perform better than men in both high school and college. One of the most alarming uses of the SAT is for the NCAA Proposition 48 and new Proposition 42 standards. Under the sliding scale of Prop 42, students with a 2.5 GPA must have a minimum SAT

The University *Is* Popular Culture

Gerald Graff

Like most academics, I was surprised that the recent attack on "political correctness" in the humanities has been so persuasive to such a wide audience. Not that I don't think political correctness is real and something to worry about. PC *is* a real problem, I think, even if Roger Kimball and Dinesh D'Souza say it's a problem. But the allegations by these and other conservatives of the takeover of the entire American university by activist radicals have been so fantasmagorically exaggerated that I was amazed and dismayed that so many unsuspecting nonacademics have seemingly bought it. The more I think about the matter, however, the more I wonder why I should have been amazed. Given the remarkably nebulous picture of the academic humanities that has existed in the public mind, why shouldn't the public have found the PC horror stories completely convincing?

The fact is that the recent anti-PC attack would never have been so successful if it had not been overlaid on uncertainties about the humanities that have existed ever since they first became academic departments a hundred years ago. If academic humanists have proved to be sitting ducks for the most exaggerated misrepresentations, surely one reason is that few people outside universities and not many inside have been able to form a clear idea of just what it is an "academic humanist" does. Three anecdotes to illustrate my point:

1. Several years ago, on my way to a conference at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina, I and several other conference participants find ourselves at the Raleigh/Durham airport looking for the courtesy vans that are to drive us out to Research Triangle. Just then an announcement comes over the intercom: "Will the parties going to the National *Humanitarian* Center please meet your buses at the baggage claim area."

2. The National Humanities Alliance recently commissions a public relations firm to survey public perceptions of the humanities. Though the great majority of those interviewed claim to have a favorable image of the humanities, like the airport pager a substantial number associate the term with "humanitarian" activities such as prevention of cruelty to animals. Others who answer yes to the question of whether they themselves participate in the humanities list "singing in the shower" as an example of humanistic activity.

3. A college dean confesses that he has always had difficulty understanding why the humanities should have become a department and research field. "What I don't see," he says, "is why there need to be whole departments to cover the books that I read going to work on the train every day."

These cases are not surprising, for we humanists have done little to address—or even recognize—the widespread public incomprehension about what it is we do, what our research is all about, and why it should be supported by institutions devoted to educating undergraduates. And when we *have* recognized the public's incomprehension of our activities, we have tended to treat it as an inevitability rather than something we might be able to change. In fact, we have come up with all sorts of reasons why we either cannot represent ourselves to a broader public or why we should not.

In the olden days, this disdain for public representation justified itself as a refusal to lower ourselves to the level of the philistines. In today's more politically enlightened times, the disdain is justified as a refusal to be co-opted by the dominant structures of discourse. Whereas popularization was once seen as vulgar, it is now seen as politically complicit. But the resulting ineptitude at representing ourselves to the public ends up being the same in either case.

It is odd that an institution that has recently generated such an unprecedented degree of sophistication about the workings of *representation* should remain arrested at so primitive a level when it comes to thinking about its own representations. But having treated mere image-making as beneath our dignity, we have left it to our enemies to construct our public image for us.

To put it another way, the humanities have yet to come to terms with the fact that, once the university became a mass institution, it perforce became an agent of cultural popularization. I wonder if we have ever really believed that mass education is possible—that is, that it is possible to reach most students, not just the top fifteen or twenty per cent. One might think that it would be easy for teachers who work in a *mass* education system to think of themselves as popularizers, and that it would be easier still now that many humanists are more receptive than we once were to the study of popular culture. American popular culture and the American professional university emerged at the same moment historically, and they have followed similar lines of development and expansion. Yet we still tend to think of popular culture as something we may *study* but not as something that we *are*.

Of course it is the competitive relation between

academic and nonacademic forms of popular culture that makes it difficult to see their points of commonality. It has long been a commonplace—heard equally on the Right and the Left—that academic intellectual culture has been in a losing competition with the media for the attention and allegiance of students. How can the culture of the book possibly compete with the culture of TV? How can Immanuel Kant and Henry James hold their own against the Super Bowl, Wrestlemania, and Madonna?

The oppositions are deceptive, however, in more ways than one. For if there is a real gulf here, it is no longer between Madonna and Henry James, now that both have become objects of academic analysis, but between Madonna on the one hand and academic discourse about Madonna *and* Henry James on the other. The real opposition is not between media culture and high culture, but between media culture, which has popularized itself successfully, and the culture of academic intellectuality and analysis, which has hardly begun to imagine that it may have possibilities of popularization, or which remains deeply ambivalent about popularization.

There are signs that the present culture war may be altering this attitude, shaking humanists out of our traditional complacency and forcing us to recognize that we too are part of the culture industry and are engaged in a critical struggle for survival in it. If recent anti-PC attacks force us to become more aware of our responsibilities for public representation, it may eventually be possible to look back at even the most ill-informed and malicious attacks and say, "Thanks, we needed that." Whatever one may say about them, the success of these attacks has exposed something that we cannot afford to ignore, namely, how poorly we humanists have performed our role as popularizers—that is, as teachers.

The very hostility that has been expressed toward academic humanists in the culture war is a sign that the distance has decreased between those humanists and the nonacademic public, who a generation ago would not have cared enough about their doings to make best-sellers of books like *The Closing of the American Mind* and *Illiberal Education*. Then, too, not all the curiosity has been negative. During the same period when attacks on "the rising hegemony of the politically correct" were crowding the *New York Times* op-ed pages, the *New York Times Magazine* was running picture stories glamorizing academic trend-setters like Richard Rorty, Elaine Showalter, Henry Louis Gates, Stanley Fish, Cornel West, and Stephen Greenblatt. The anti-PC attack represents only the nasty side of America's highly ambivalent and often worshipful fascination with the academy. We have only just concluded the first generation in American history during which a majority of eligible Americans went to college, creating a large sector of the middle class that wants to keep in touch with what is going on on campus, if only to know what its tuition money is buying for its sons and daughters.

Let us return to my earlier comparison between the popular media and the academy in their notoriously unequal competition for the minds of the young and the culture at large. The point I would now add is that the media did not achieve their enormous influence without elaborately thought out efforts at collective organization. Everyone knows that the awesome effort of organization that goes into the making of even the slightest television commercial is in many ways a more impressive creative feat than the resulting product. To be sure, a television commercial has cultural influence because it has the backing both of money and ideological hegemony. Even so, the commercial would not achieve such ideological potency without a tremendous amount of teamwork involving writers, directors, actors, photographers, station managers, and innumerable other participants in a division of labor that is integrated to a staggering degree.

What I want to suggest is that it is foolish to think that academic culture can compete with the television commercial or the rock concert unless it is willing to think seriously about how it organizes its own representations. It is not foolish, however, to believe that academic culture has a potential that has gone untapped because it has failed to think seriously about how it organizes its representations.

This is not to say that American teenagers would drop Beavis and Butthead or *Wayne's World* for *PMLA* if only we organized the MLA convention more effectively. I am saying, however, that some of the intellectual concerns even of the MLA convention (which is bound to have a panel on Beavis and Butthead one of these days, if it has not already) have a potential interest for young people that won't be discovered or tapped without an effort at organization.

If we academics are willing to study the media we should also be willing to learn from them. To be sure, there are vast differences: organizing a Madonna concert or a Miller Lite commercial is clearly something quite different from organizing the history of literature, much less the history of culture, or the discourse of anthropology or literary criticism. Quite apart from their enormous advantage in the amounts of money available to them, the organizers of concerts and commercials also enjoy a degree of consensus about the ends and means of their representations that academics do not and cannot have or even desire. We have an idea what it means to organize a rock

NEWSCLIPS

score of 700 and students with a 2.0 GPA must have an SAT of 900.

Even ignoring the charges of gender and racial bias against the SAT, its use in Prop 42 is puzzling. If we have NCAA standards solely to encourage athletes to do better in school, why do we require an SAT minimum which is unrelated to academic performance and which cannot be easily changed by a student's effort to improve? Studying for the SAT does little to improve one's score, since, according to an Educational Testing Service spokesperson, "the best you can do is move up 35 to 50 points." Unlike high school grades, which are strongly linked to the effort a student makes, the SAT has virtually no relation to what a student learns in class. The athlete, threatened by the punishment of Prop 42, has an incentive to take core subjects and work hard to get good grades. But this athlete can do virtually nothing to alter an SAT score.

There is absolutely no evidence that athletes with extremely low SAT scores are incapable of doing college work; there is absolutely no evidence that being forced to sit out a year of athletics and being denied a scholarship benefits a student educationally; and there is absolutely no evidence that the threat of losing a year of eligibility because of low SAT scores has caused student-athletes to take academic work more seriously. The principle behind Prop 48 and Prop 42—that minimal standards will encourage athletes to learn more in high school—is a just and admirable idea. But this goal is inhibited by the use of a biased and narrow test which imposes penalties on student-athletes for their poor performance on the SAT, rather than encouraging them to study harder in school.

Conservative Intelligence

"From the beginning of intelligence testing about sixty-five years ago to the present, blacks have consistently averaged about eighteen points lower than whites (about 82 for blacks compared to 100 for whites) on the standard Stanford-Binet IQ test, and a similar gap is shown on other mental aptitude tests...A score of 75 is generally considered necessary for graduation from elementary school, 95 for graduation from high school, 105 for admission to college, and 115 for admission to graduate or professional

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NEWSCLIPS

schools....if an IQ score of 115 is considered (conservatively) to be the minimum necessary to qualify for medical school—an SAT verbal score of 600, it should be noted, is equivalent to an IQ score of about 125—the number of blacks admitted to medical schools would make up 0.7 percent of the entering class, rather than the 12 percent that would correspond to the proportion of blacks in the American population."

—Lino Graglia in *The Imperiled Academy* (Transaction, 1993).

"Is it possible to discuss Plato's *Symposium* with students who have an I.Q. of, say, 100? Maybe it is. Doing so might be an interesting experience. But how about I.Q.'s of 90, or 80?"

—Jeffrey Hart in *Academic Questions* (Fall 1993).

"Ultimately we will be able to predict IQ scores by taking a single cell from an embryo."

—J. Philippe Rushton in *Society* (March/April 1994).

The Culture Debates

Russell Jacoby's *Dogmatic Wisdom: How the Culture Wars Divert Education and Distract America* (Doubleday, 1994) is one of the best responses yet written to the invented "political correctness" crisis. Jacoby points out that after the onslaught of right-wing attacks, "no leftist stepped forward with a book as sweeping and compelling as those by the conservatives." At first, Jacoby seems to fill this void. In Chapter 2, he examines in detail many of the PC anecdotes reiterated by conservatives and finds them to be "dramatic and fictitious tales of fired university professors." But Jacoby unfortunately leaves his work half-done, with a wishy-washy conclusion belied by his own evidence: "Conservatives may be hypocritical or inconsistent, yet still on the mark; perhaps leftist students and academics do choke discussion."

Jacoby also explores various cultural issues, such as bias-free language, diversity, and relativism. His vision is broad and free-flowing, moving between centuries with ease and exploring such diverse topics as Einstein, Freud, Herodotus, Hegel, the 16th Century pogroms of Spanish Jews, and Bosnia in the space of a short section on relativism and cultural diversity. Jacoby realizes that the threat of violence does not

concert, but what does it mean to "organize" the history of culture or the discourse of the humanities? And who will decide who gets to be the organizers and the organized?

Neither the cultural left nor the cultural right have the power to superimpose a privileged agenda on the entire curriculum—that is the limitation of all the schemes for a "radical curriculum" or a "pedagogy of the oppressed." Nor is a monolithic leftist or rightist curriculum even desirable, since neither the left nor the right agenda can become intelligible to students unless they are taught in relation to one another. However at odds they may be ideologically, the cultural left and the right are cognitively interdependent—they need one another in order to become comprehensible to those students and others for whom terms like "cultural left" and "right" are now nebulous.

It will not do, however, to disdain the idea of "organizing" academic and intellectual representations because such an idea is ideologically problematic—what idea would not be?—or because it sounds ominously like social engineering. The history of culture and the discourse of the humanities are *already* elaborately organized in innumerable complex ways, by departments, journals, fields, curricula, courses, and programs. The choice is never between organizing institutional representations or not organizing them, for by definition *some* form of organization of institutional representations is inevitably always in place. To pretend that it is possible to occupy an autonomous space that is not already organized is only to make it more likely that the existing mode of organization will not change.

I have argued elsewhere that as academic culture has become more ideologically diverse and conflicted, it is increasingly impossible to organize departments and curricula around a consensus on what should be taught and why. My argument that the best response the academy can make to the conflicts over culture is to "teach the conflicts" themselves has been an organizational argument, an argument about how difference and controversy can replace consensus as a means of giving coherence to the curriculum.

Critics who have called this proposal impractical, or too radical, or not radical enough, have missed its central point, which is that the academy is *already* teaching the conflicts now and has been for some time. The academy teaches the conflicts, in effect, every time a student goes from a science class to a humanities class or from a class taught by a traditionalist to a class taught by a feminist.

The academy is already teaching the conflicts now, but it is doing so in a poorly organized way, representing disparate positions and assumptions to students as a series of isolated monologues rather than in their engagement and relationship with one another. When this disconnected mode of representation does not simply conceal the major cultural conflicts from students—they are becoming too hard to conceal—it prevents students from gaining control of the intellectual discourses in which the conflicts are fought out.

A student today can go from one literature teacher who assumes that "the Western humanistic tradition" is uncontroversially above criticism to another teacher who refers uncontroversially to that tradition as an instance of the "hegemonic ideology of the dominant order." Since the hypothetical student never sees these two teachers in dialogue with one another, he or she may fail to recognize that they are referring to the same thing—that is, that they are in disagreement. Such a student is likely to be confused about the nature of both teacher's positions, which make sense only in relation to and in dialogue with one another. These two teachers need one another in order to become intelligible to their students—and to others outside the academic orbit.

In conclusion, then, I am suggesting that there is a connection between the academy's unintelligibility to students and other nonprofessionals and the fact that we tend to teach in isolation from our colleagues, effacing the dialogical relations between our positions that our intelligibility depends on. But I am also suggesting that there is a connection between this non-dialogical mode of organization and our notorious unintelligibility to the general public. A conflicted institution like ours can explain itself only by making its differences coherent. This we have not done, and we cannot do, as long as we fail to organize ourselves and our curriculum more dialogically.

That is why clarifying what we do to outsiders has to be a collective not an individual project, and why we need to start applying to the curriculum the sophisticated analysis of representation that we are accustomed to applying to film and television. But beyond such analyses, we need to come to terms with the inevitable task of popularization that has been given to us whether we are comfortable with it or not. In other words, we need to come to terms with the fact that we are teachers—not teachers as opposed to researchers but teachers and popularizers of our research. The media did not achieve its vast influence without effective organization. Neither can the academy.

TDC Co-Coordinator Gerald Graff teaches English and education at the University of Chicago. A version of this essay was presented at the 1993 convention of the Midwest MLA.

Yes, Exactly! If You "Criticize" Us, You Are a "Reactionary":

An Open Letter to Gregory Jay and Gerald Graff

Donald Morton and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh

HAVING READ YOUR most recent desperate attempt to legitimate an oppressive bourgeois pluralism ("Some Questions About Critical Pedagogy," Fall 1993), we do indeed want to state—without "irony"—that if you criticize us, you are reactionary. We make this statement without "irony" because first all, unlike Andrew Ross, we cannot afford "irony"—we simply do not have the ludic space for the playfulness available to Ross, Graff, and friends ("irony" is the space of the "reversible" subject whose reversibility is historically necessary for the bourgeois academy's project of producing undecidable knowledges which "ironically" keep questions about the social totality at bay). Secondly, we do not think that Bérubé and Graff's "Regulations for Literary Criticism in the 1990s" is finally all that funny given its anxiety to preserve for the bourgeois academy the unwritten rules of pluralism which the piece tries to achieve through the use of "irony." So, yes (again), if you "criticize" us, you are reactionary—and, what's more, we have evidence to prove it.

You are reactionary because, under the alibi of "democratic freedom" (more on that later), you reduce the project of revolutionary collective emancipation to a matter of (inter)personal well-being; in other words, you reduce "politics" to "ethics." It is indeed reactionary and counter-revolutionary to pose the seemingly "hypothetical" question "What if...the student...decides that for him or her authentic liberation means joining a corporation and making a lot of money?" This "hypothetical" question (which is not "hypothetical" at all but is in fact identical with the model of subjectivity supposed by the ruling class and its theorists) is posed as "hypothetical" only to be a more rhetorically effective legitimation of pluralism by its quiet appeal to the bourgeois commonsense in which the revolutionary project of collective praxis (which critiques not just such a specific "choice" but the notion of the subject being "free to choose") is "totalitarian." Any appeal to such a "hypothetical" question (and its underlying commonsense) is reactionary because the very representation of revolutionary praxis as "totalitarian" and any argument for the "difference" of personal "liberation" and personal "freedom" as the ultimate goal of a successful life is exactly what negates collective emancipation and in doing so mystifies the economic interests of the ruling class and claims those interests to be the interests of all classes, the ultimate horizon of life itself. You are reactionary because the un-said of your counter-argument (the seemingly hypothetical "What if...the student...?") which is offered to demolish the claims of oppositional pedagogy is that the limit tes(x)t of a happy life is the unhindered path to the accumulation of "profit," which is at the same time the denial of historically determined human "needs."

Emancipation is not achieved through individual quests for success. Such quests are not equivalent to personal freedom; and therefore in making such an equation, you legitimate the notion of the entrepreneurial subject that is necessary for the uncontested continuation of the regime of capital and wage-labor. Anyone who renders the regime of "profit" as a possible goal of life also legitimates the extraction of surplus labor (the only source of profit) as a natural part of social life and in so doing sanctions the existing exploitative social relations of production. Such persons are reactionary. Theorists who posit such "hypothetical" questions are reactionary because their "arguments" support the dominant social relations of production and do not bring to crisis the rifts and contradictions between the forces of production and social relations of production. They write, as you do, to manage that crisis—to conceal it under the alibi of a "democratic culture" in which everyone is "free" to pursue "profit" (not just in the domain of "business" as such but also in the academy and the culture industry which also support "entrepreneurs") knowing full well that your "profit" is someone else's "loss." You are reactionary because your writings legitimate personal gain as the goal of social life and systematically undercut any attempt to establish causal relations between "loss" and "profit," which is another way of saying that your writings attempt to defuse class struggle through the displacement of "conflicts" by "difference." So, yes, in criticizing our goal of overthrowing the regime of "profit" and putting in its place historically determined human needs, you are reactionary.

Emancipation is not about "desire" ("making a lot of money"); it is about meeting human "needs." No single person can possibly be emancipated or liberated when his liberation ("making a lot of

NEWSCLIPS

come from diversity, but that "the reverse is closer to the truth: intolerance and the denial of diversity bloodies the past, present, and future."

Jacoby's analysis of academia is less perceptive, repeating his previous complaints in *The Last Intellectuals* about leftist professors. He attacks them for their "disdain for a public prose," their elitism, and their jargon-filled writings. Yet Jacoby seems totally unaware of the current resurgence of public intellectuals represented by highly readable writers such as Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, and Michael Bérubé, who frequently appear in the public press.

Jacoby also makes some glaring factual errors: "In the last fifteen years traditional majors like philosophy, history, and English have declined, while business and management majors have doubled." In reality, the rise of business majors occurred in the 1970s, while humanities majors have made a small comeback in the 1980s and 1990s. And Jacoby claims that "no one suggests reducing black or minority enrollment to prevent racism, a logical if unpalatable step," seemingly unaware that D'Souza and many other conservative critics of affirmative action have suggested precisely this.

But Jacoby's book—while it fails as a full critique of the "political correctness" scare—succeeds as a subtle and thoughtful analysis of American culture and higher education. Jacoby's attack on the elitism which has prevailed on all sides and in the media during the culture wars is particularly powerful. He observes that we have endlessly debated minor events at leading universities where privileged professors teach the children of the wealthy, while remaining unconcerned about what is happening at less prestigious colleges where the vast majority of students are educated. Although Jacoby does not provide this needed study except by a few anecdotes, he does open our eyes to the fact that the culture debates must be broadened beyond today's limited focus.

Conservative McCarthyism

Seymour Martin Lipset declares in the introduction to his 1993 edition of *Rebellion in the University* (Transaction Books):

NEWSCLIPS

"The Lazarsfeld-Thielens study was in fact conducted to evaluate the impact of McCarthyism on social scientists. As might be expected, the overwhelming majority were strongly anti-McCarthy. What was much more surprising, given the assumption that McCarthy and other government investigations of Communism were intimidating even politically moderate faculty, pressing professors to expound conformist views, was the conclusion that it was less dangerous on campus for a faculty member to be an opponent of McCarthy than to be a left-wing defender of Communism. Lazarsfeld and Thielens noted that overt defenders of the Wisconsin Senator, of the anti-Communist security program, at major universities were much more likely to be ostracized by their colleagues (and, probably, if young, to be denied tenure or promotion) than were Communists."

But the Lazarsfeld-Thielens study actually said: "There were altogether perhaps five instances in which simple 'conservatism,' uncomplicated by overtones of bigotry or authoritarianism, led to unfortunate consequences for a teacher....the small number of these incidents suggests that, whatever their experiences in earlier periods, the conservative wing of American college teachers have rarely found themselves endangered in recent years." (*The Academic Mind*, 1955). By contrast, the study reported 990 incidents, in which 29% involved charges of Communism and subversion, and 13% charges of leftist political views.

Artistic Freedom

From the February 11, 1994 issue of the right-wing *Washington Inquirer*, criticizing the removal of religious pictures from a display by the Arts Council of Fairfax County, Virginia:

"The rule forbids the display of 'religious scenes' as well as nudes, weapons, drug paraphernalia and violence along with patriotic expression and unpatriotic subjects. That seems a surefire way to display pablum and puppydogs but little else."

The Politics of Condemnation

Officially speaking, Khalid Abdul Muhammad may be the most hated person in America. His vile November

money") would inevitably mean that a lot of people make no money. In this case, his happiness would be the misery of others. This is why if you criticize us—those who advocate collective emancipation and deploy oppositional pedagogy to provide critique-al knowledges about the relation between the personal and the collective, reform and revolution—you are indeed reactionary. Your project is identical with the project of advocates of the free market. The free market is the tool of enslavement of humankind and not the means for its emancipation. Capitalism is not a basically socially positive regime which has its "unfortunate" and "minor" correctable "abuses": capitalism is—by definition and in all its operations—exploitative and oppressive because it is based on the extraction of surplus labor from the many for the benefit of the few.

Which brings us to the ideological alibi under whose protection you legitimate your reactionary politics: "democracy." Your tale about the student who finds liberation in making a lot of money is, of course, an allegorical defense of the right of the entrepreneur to pursue profit without being encumbered or "harassed" by the critique-al knowledge of collectivity. You tell this tale of "freedom" in the space of a pluralistic "democracy" in which there are no "positions" (with "consequences") but only topics for unhindered, endless "conversation" during which no one "imposes" his/her views on others. Your model of the classroom is that cherished institution of bourgeois democracy, the "town hall" meeting, in which no decisions are ever reached but where instead a great deal of "good" conversation is had by all. Like the "town hall" meeting, your classroom/pedagogy is a strategy of crisis-management: it allows the parties speaking to feel that they are "involved" without ever allowing anyone to reach a "conclusion" (which is the main function of that critique-al knowledge which you scorn and reject as totalitarian because it arrives at a conclusion and establishes "priorities" as the basis of praxis), much less to act upon that conclusion. In your "ethical pedagogy," to reach a "conclusion" is regarded as an act of violence that puts an abrupt end to "conversation." In actuality, however, "ethical pedagogy" is the very instrument of (violent) coercion: it blocks any "conclusion" (except, of course, the un-said conclusion that there should be no "conclusions") and thus allows for the non-concluding work of dominant ideology—which legitimates the violent extraction of surplus labor from the many for the benefit of the few—to go on. As we have already indicated in our book, *Theory, (Post) Modernity, Opposition*, Graff's "teaching the conflicts" is nothing more than an "ethical" "airing of differences" in the "town hall" meeting. This "ethical pedagogy" is itself an extension of another bourgeois "right": freedom of speech which, as we have argued in our most recent book, *Theory as Resistance*, is a strategy used to conceal the fact that in bourgeois democracy political rights are finally only a substitute for economic rights. What bourgeois democracy denies in the real world of the economic and material well-fare of the citizen, it grants him/her in the domain of idealist politics (semiotic freedom).

In other words, in your discourse, "democracy" is itself an alibi for the quest for profit; this form of democracy "deregulates"—as in the Republican

You are reactionary because you defend this de-regulated subject and legitimate the ludic freedom of the subject of capital whose grounding principle is concisely articulated by that theorist of the ruling class, Stanley Fish: "I don't have any principles."

Party's practices of "deregulating" business—the subjects inhabiting that space so that those subjects can "understand" that in pursuing their "free entrepreneurial acts" they should not follow any "regulations" (consider the needs of others) since all "regulations" are in fact acts of "totalization"—and, as your narrative goes, any totalization will lead, eventually if not immediately, to "totalitarianism." You are reactionary because you defend this de-regulated subject and legitimate the ludic freedom of the subject of capital whose grounding principle is concisely articulated by that theorist of the ruling class, Stanley Fish, who declares in his recent book, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech...And It's a Good Thing, Too*: "I don't have any principles."

Fish's ludically "reversible" statement ("I believe in anything...") (which will be read commonsensically as merely "scandalous"), your "hypothetical" question, and Andrew Ross' "irony" are all strategies of this deregulation that obtains a free reign for capital and wage-labor. This "deregulatory" democracy is an ideological space for guaranteeing that nothing "stands between" the enterprising individual and her/his chance at profit. In your "ethical pedagogy," democracy means removing all obstacles (such as the awareness of being in a "position" that has consequences for others) from the path of the enterprising subject so that he/she can maximize his/her profit ("make a lot of money").

Hence, what your democracy and its allied pedagogy actually serve to do is legitimate the

violence that constitutes the extraction of surplus labor (profit) from the masses of exploited workers for the benefit of the few. It furthermore seeks the "consent" of all parties concerned to this violence by the act of "persuasion": this space of "persuasion" assumes—falsely—that all are equal and that "persuasion" is simply a personal matter of voluntaristic "assent" and "agreement." This is, of course, the "pragmatic" (Rortyan) American version of the bankrupt Foucaultian ethics understood as "the care of the self." If others don't have what they need, "that's their problem," as Rush Limbaugh, popularizing your pedagogy of "What if...," keeps repeating in his daily/nightly "pedagogy of conversation" in which he "teaches the conflicts" in order to defuse and deflect class struggle.

Your notion of "persuasion-through-conversation" (the Fish-Limbaugh-Rorty strategy) is, of course, a mystification of the history of labor: what has gone before and will come after "conversation" and fully determines what goes on in the "conversation" itself. By proposing persuasion as its strategy, your "ethical pedagogy" mystifies the economic relations involved in the relation inscribed in "who persuades whom." Like all your other terms, you use the term "persuasion" as if it were a transhistorical and transcendental category. Persuasion is historical and as such is shaped by what stage of class struggle any given society is currently in. As Marx indicates, the laws of motion of "persuasion" are always mobilized by "the silent compulsion of economic relations." He who has economic power "persuades" those who do not. Hence, the emphasis on "ethics" and "consensus" serves simply to naturalize the "silent compulsion of the economic." So, yes, if you criticize us, you are reactionary because in criticizing us, you are attempting to block the production of critique-al knowledges by representing us as "awful" violators of democratic processes without ever allowing us to demonstrate how your democracy is an alibi for the "free market" and how your "ethics" is nothing more than a post-al mode of enslaving people. This is of course the version of democracy which ethical pedagogy circulates to place the interests of the ruling classes beyond the reach of contesting critiques. A true democracy, we believe, is the Leninist democratic-centralism combining the power of the working people with the leadership from a critique-al and revolutionary center. Not all "truths"—as your relativism (ethical pedagogy) proposes—are "truthful" in social collectivity. You are reactionary because your politics is an elaborate naturalization of the social differences produced by capitalist relations of production.

Yes, you are reactionary and, what's more, like most reactionaries, also colonialist and racist. In a condescending gesture (which, by the way, shows how really "democratic" you are in your practices), you say "Freire's work" might be suitable for "Latin American peasants," but not for inhabitants of North American campuses. This gesture itself shows your complicity in naturalizing the international division of labor. Here all your pretense to "democracy" and "ethics" cannot occlude the fact that you are reactionary and racist.

No, you cannot "criticize" us without becoming a reactionary. This, however, by no means implies that you could not "critique" our writings by subjecting our texts to a rigorous theoretical and historical reunderstanding of their conditions of possibility and marking the limits of our practices/texts. Our point is that such a "critique" (not to be confused with "criticism") is not possible from within your reactionary moralist and corporate humanist theory of the subject. Contrary to what your "ethical pedagogy" proposes, the subject does not freely choose the position from which she/he "speaks." The "What if...?" is itself world-historical and is articulated in the axis of class.

Mas'ud Zavarzadeh and Donald Morton teach English at Syracuse University.

Get Involved in TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE TO GIVE TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE A VOICE IN THE CULTURE WARS. WE WANT YOUR OPINIONS TO BE HEARD.

- Help us with ideas for raising badly needed funds.
- Write articles and book reviews for *Democratic Culture*.
- Distribute copies of *Democratic Culture* to friends and colleagues, and encourage them to join us.
- Give us suggestions about what TDC should do in the future.
- Organize talks, debates, and conferences on your campus.
- Write letters and editorials to local and campus newspapers.
- Send us newspaper clippings and information about controversies at your school.

TDC P.O. Box 6405 Evanston, IL 60204 (312) 743-3662

NEWSCLIPS

29, 1993 speech has been condemned by unanimous resolutions in Congress and attacked by virtually every black (and white) leader in the entire country.

But this condemnation raises the issue of when condemnation rather than conversation is appropriate. Who do we condemn? Who do we try to persuade? How much condemnation can be part of a civil discourse?

Civility is an important virtue, and all too often the culture debates on both sides have been characterized by vicious condemnation, rather than an effort to understand what the other side believes. But civility cannot be sacrificed to truth. We must walk a fine line between the blunt truth-telling of condemnation and the civility necessary for intellectual debate.

Sheldon Hackney has urged that we have a "national conversation" on the question of American pluralism, and it is a wise idea to restore some civility to the "culture wars."

Yet George Will attacks the "national conversation" plan in *Newsweek* (April 18), contending that it is an academic plot to "subsidize and supervise" conversation. What Will seems to fear is a "conversation" he can't control from the pages of *Newsweek* and the set of *This Week With David Brinkley*, a "conversation" where his misleading soundbites and inaccurate statements might be contradicted by the facts.

Contrary to what Will believes, it is not academia, but the mainstream media where "shrill rhetoric" and petty grievances have dominated many discussions. And what should the National Endowment for the Humanities do, if not engage the American public in an educational discussion about these issues which are so important to all of us?

The *Wall Street Journal* has even urged that every college participate in a one-day national referendum on political correctness (dare one call it a "teach-in"?). This is a good idea, although the *Journal* would undoubtably prefer not to discuss the real issues which the accusation of "PC" often obscures. But the *Journal* might be surprised to find that its arguments about PC have little basis in reality and will fail to persuade most students who are far more aware of what's really happening on college campuses. A debate about PC is precisely what we have urged and so rarely seen.

—*by John K. Wilson*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Buddha and the G-Thang

Amitava Kumar

Surrounded mostly by other professors of English, on a December 26 flight bound for Toronto, I read Gregory Jay and Gerald Graff's thoughts on critical pedagogy (*Democratic Culture*, Fall 1993), and, following their serene conversation about what a genuinely democratic pedagogy might look like, I meditatively contemplated Brecht's parable about the Buddha.

When the Buddha was preaching the virtues of attaining salvation, his pupils asked him what was it like to achieve that nothingness, whether it was like being weightless in water or like a pleasant drowsiness that visits you when you are wrapped in a blanket. The Buddha was silent. But later, to those who had not asked the question, he recounted a story. I saw a house that was burning, the Buddha said. There were people inside and I called out to them. But they seemed in no hurry. One of them, whose body was already aflame, asked me what it was like outside, whether there was a wind blowing and whether there was another house for them. Without answering, the Buddha said, I left. The people here, he had decided, need to burn to death before they stop asking questions.

As an act of faith at 30,000 feet, I chose to believe that the G's (Gerald and Gregory) were not posing an idle question to the profession when they asked whether we were only preaching to the converted. Instead, unlike the main G-man, Gautama the Buddha, I decided charitably that there was a difficult truth being approached here. Specifically, the truth about a pedagogy that lies beyond the mere assumption of oppositionality, one that asks what forms it shall adopt and what contradictions it must embrace.

The G's proposed an ethical pedagogy that was willing to accept that students in a classroom did not share the assumptions of the radical teacher. However, not content to celebrate quietism, they pointed towards persuasion as a pedagogical strategy; political commitments were to enter into dialogue with opposed voices, leading to successful conversions and also stronger and clearer understandings. This line of thinking seemed attractive enough, except that it thrust me into a limbaugh. I was being asked to talk to Rush. And it seemed very clear to me that while I'd have very little chance of converting Rush (not because he is stubborn or stupid—though he might be both—but because his interests and his future lies in opposing me), I would teach critical thinking to my students better by showing them *why* I would much more happily flush Rush.

In other words, the point of critical pedagogy might not lie so much in successful persuasion. Rather, in the face of equal dangers of uncritical acceptance and unthinking dismissal, we should engage students in a process that explores the *limits* of one's articulations and practices, drawing teacher and students alike in a learning process that is mutually rewarding.

Talking of limits...my return to earth, to the feverish ambience of the MLA in Toronto, was a grim reminder of the limits of the teaching profession. The palpable sense of panic and despair, due to widespread job cuts and hiring freezes, was the only living thing in the Toronto cold. In these circumstances, even when we don't talk about the more pervasive, "savage inequalities" of the whole education set-up and of the wider social system in general, I think oppositional pedagogy must begin by foregrounding the way, under late capitalism, schools are assigned a seemingly autonomous role for ideological reasons while they are simultaneously dependent upon and regulated by a brutally economic logic.

In other words, I feel less sanguine than the G's about the prospect of relegating exploitation to Latin America, though I will certainly agree with them that Freire's pedagogy cannot be transplanted here without any attempt at distinguishing between Brazilian *campesinos* and North American frat rats. The G's are correct in insisting that critical teaching must involve us in a participatory process where we arrive at a new meaning. It is only that I'm more wary of dismissing left models as undialogic or insufficiently theorized. With the recent interest in this country in films about the excesses of communist China, and the corresponding interest on the streets of Beijing in McDonald's and a new Baskin-Robbins, let me pause momentarily with Mao. In his report on the peasant revolt in Hunan, the young Mao presented an exemplary lesson in critical pedagogy when he critiqued his fellow communists for forcing peasants to cast aside their superstitions. "The Communist Party's propaganda policy in such matters should be, 'Draw the bow without shooting, just indicate the motions.' It is for peasants themselves to cast aside the idols, pull down the temples to the martyred virgins and the arches to the chaste and faithful widows; it is wrong for anyone else to do it for them." I think the G's would agree with Mao that it is the successful staging of the structure of persuasion—rather than gaining mere assent or simple dissent—that is the more productive intervention in teaching.

A critical pedagogy cannot be open-ended about its ends; its open-endedness lies in its understanding of the means. The aim of critical pedagogy is to continually struggle to introduce and develop, in the face of massive odds, that space of empowerment where students confront new knowledges, contest dogma, and learn to be something other than willing salespersons for a defunct empire.

It is a difficult task. It calls for a greater attention to the *means* of critical pedagogy. One of these is language and our teaching of the conflicts that are staged in its domain; I applaud the G's interest in p.c. as a pedagogical negotiation of the troubled history of that term. This is a culture where the word "radical" is used to describe the design of a $35,000 automobile. This is also a culture where the word "oppression," in some of the more hysterical p.c. diatribes of the left, has as much meaning and material basis as, say, "ecstasy" in a Calvin Klein ad. In order to "stage" the workings of ideology, it is important to lay out for one's students the histories, local or broader, that produce particular meanings. As students and teachers we need to scratch question marks on our classroom walls and on the pages of our books and papers, and we need to mark relentlessly, for ourselves and others, the manner in which we stumble to our answers.

In *Communications*, Raymond Williams wrote that "the large, impersonal media" appear to common folk "almost as acts of God." Williams' work, in the context of adult education classes, was at once to think through the way the media structure our perceptions and, at the same time, to produce more informed and critical responses. *Democratic Culture*, too, can perform that important task of opening more questions for us to re-think the means at our disposal while, at the same time, it helps alter the limits of our profession. Evan Watkins has pointed out that "pedagogy is always a matter of circulation and distribution as much as it is of production." *Democratic Culture* can help *connect* what Watkins calls "the pedagogical effects of our work" in a public space. The effort to change classroom practices while also trying to reconstitute the public sphere just might drive my Toronto blues away.

Amitava Kumar teaches English at the University of Florida–Gainesville.

A Letter to the Left

Elizabeth Powers

I'm not sure how I came to be on your mailing list since I admit to being one of those people for whom red flags go up whenever I come across the conjunction of "Democratic" and "Teachers." I was heartened, however, by the front-page article in the Fall 1993 issue of your publication by Gregory Jay and Gerald Graff addressing what the authors perceived as an excess of PC on the Left. I also thought the Ward Parks/William Demastes exchange worth reading.

Other articles were not so heartening, although perhaps they were published in order expressly to demonstrate the excesses of Leftist PC—for instance, Michael Schwalbe's "The Children of ReaganBush." Why does Mr. Schwalbe feel it is his job to "change minds...by force of superior knowledge"? Is it really a teacher's function to "change minds," with all the connotations of arm twisting (sorry for the mixed metaphor) that phrase has? Students, like everyone else, have personalities that in many cases are only delicately maintained and that are, in any case, in the process of revision. But it is an internal process. One would do well not to tamper (as in "getting in their faces").

Anyone who goes into a classroom with the intention of arguing people out of one set of beliefs and into another, "right" set is seeking, like stereotyped religious figures, to convert people. (As in, "It was time they [conservative students] saw the light.") He has failed to understand what the classroom is about and, in addition, is guilty of harassment. Students are at the start of what one hopes will be a long intellectual journey that will involve many detours.

Recently in a class in which I taught Max Frisch's novel *Homo Faber* I handed out excerpts from Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*, a book that Frisch had been reading while writing his novel and that speaks to many of the issues in that novel. One of my students, a middle-aged woman, reacted with joy at reading these excerpts, saying that she had been looking for something like this all her life. Personally I find de Beauvoir's work tendentious and exceedingly shallow, but it would never occur to me to argue my student out of her enthusiasm. As a teacher I felt vastly rewarded that I had given a student something that she will take with her on her own voyage of discovery. After all, many books that I thought were the last word twenty years ago have lost their merit on rereading. And many have retained it.

What I missed in Mr. Schwalbe's comments was any hint that his conservative students might have something to him that changed his thinking just a little. I think it is Mr. Schwalbe who "eschews argument," who views people, especially students, simply as robots to be rewired. His methodology sounds like he's teaching dogma, the "liberal" version of Mao's *Little Red Book*. Apparently those "ReaganBush children" from whom he turns away with such disgust have seen through his attempts to mold their minds. It's not a pleasant experience to encounter people who can't see us as individuals but only as entities holding the "wrong" or the "right" point of view.

In this connection, the various *mea culpas* I read throughout the issue—the apology to Naomi Wolf (author of manifestos for the privileged) and William Demastes' self-mortification—sounded exactly like the kind of confessions people were forced to make during the Red Guard era in China. The worst aspect, however, is your Left-Right dichotomy, especially your imputation, throughout the issue, that all the evils of the universe are due to a conservative way of thinking. Conservatives really do care about the bad things that happen in the world. *Pace* Schwalbe, they do not deny the existence of social problems. There is, however, a vast difference in the way that conservatives view human nature.

Now, since the so-called Left doesn't believe in human nature, doesn't, when it comes down to it, have a basis for its morals (the material world doesn't give us concepts of justice, etc.), where does it come off being so morally righteous?

Elizabeth Powers is an adjunct instructor of German and Comparative Literature at Queens College and a student at the City University of New York Graduate Center.

Michael Schwalbe replies: Elizabeth Powers doesn't understand the difference between teaching literature and teaching about the state of the social world. I suppose that in teaching literature it is wise not to try to argue students out of their tastes, but to let those tastes mature through guided exposure to good writing. Unfortunately, teaching about social problems doesn't work this way.

Many of my conservative students come to class with all kinds of erroneous notions about the state of US society and about what's happening out there beyond their limited purviews. Here are a few examples:

- Most poor people in the US are blacks living in inner cities.
- A high percentage of people on welfare are able-bodied black men.
- People are poor because they are lazy and don't want to work.
- Most homeless people are homeless by choice.
- Everybody in this society is born with an equal chance to succeed.
- Because of affirmative action, blacks are getting all the good jobs.
- The main reason women earn less than men is that they quit work to have babies.

These are not matters of taste and personality. Each of these beliefs is demonstrably false. But for a variety of reasons, this sort of pernicious nonsense is hard to dislodge. Doing so requires careful presentation of the research evidence and, of course, logical argument. If all goes well, the result of this is indeed changed minds—the result that all education aims to produce.

But my goal is not just to impart information. I want students to learn how to evaluate information and ideas critically; how to find things out for themselves; and how to arrive at well-founded opinions. And so I encourage my students to argue for themselves, argue with me, and argue with each other—but with respect for and skillful use of logic and evidence. When I can teach students how to do this well, I feel successful as a teacher.

I don't care if students leave the social problems course agreeing with me or not, as long as they leave as better thinkers. I'm happy, too, if my teaching inclines them to be more compassionate toward others who are less fortunate, makes them more sensitive to social justice issues, and evokes a sense of responsibility for taking part in the political life of their communities. If these goals imply, to minds such as Ms. Powers', indoctrination with liberal dogma, I guess I'll have to let that sort of perverse judgment run off my back.

Michael Schwalbe teaches sociology at North Carolina State University. His essay, "The Children of ReaganBush," was reprinted in the March 9, 1994 Chronicle of Higher Education.

JOIN TDC/RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

JOIN TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE WITH THIS FORM

The continuing growth and success of TDC depends on your involvement and your contributions. We ask all current TDC members *to renew their memberships* by returning this form to cover calendar year 1994. We also encourage non-members who have received this newsletter to join us in order to continue receiving **Democratic Culture**. Please mail this form to: **TDC, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston IL 60204**.

__Yes, I want to become a member of TDC __Yes, I want to renew my membership in TDC

Enclosed is my 1994 contribution of: ___$50 ___$25 ___$5 (students)

Name_____

Department_____School or Affiliation_____

City_____State_____Zip_____Home Address (if preferred)_____

Phone Numbers: Business_____FAX_____Home_____ E-mail_____

democratic Culture

Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405
Evanston, IL 60204

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 7706

AE

Please Renew Your TDC Membership Today!

Newsletter of
Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405 • Evanston, IL 60204
email: jkw3@midway.uchicago.edu

democratic Culture

Volume 3
Number 2
Fall 1994

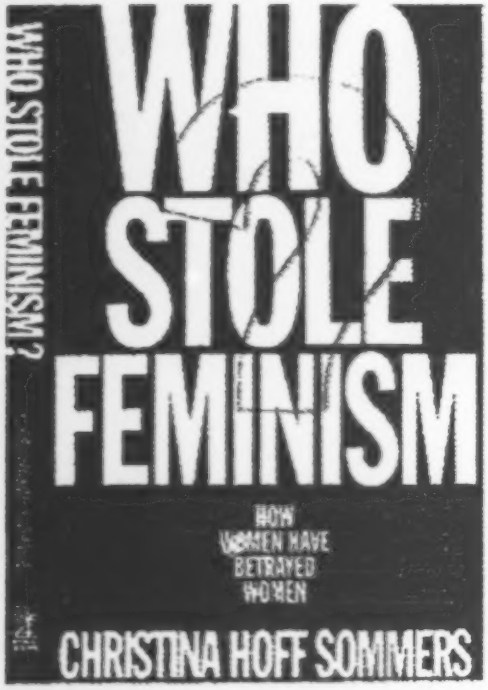
Special Issue

A symposium on

Who Stole Feminism?

How Women Have Betrayed Women

by Christina Hoff Sommers



with essays by:

Nina Auerbach
Dale Bauer
Russell Eisenman
Jonathan Entin
Patricia Farrant
Elizabeth Fay
Ann Ferguson
Laura Flanders
Susan Friedman
Linda Hirshman
Celinda Lake
Ellen Messer-Davidow
David Sadker
Myra Sadker
Rebecca Sinkler
John K. Wilson

Plus: Excerpts from new books by **Paul Loeb** and **Michael Bérubé** • **Steve Fuller** reviews *Higher Superstition* • **Donna Dunbar-Odom** on critical pedagogy • Letters • Professor **Newt Gingrich**

TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Co-Coordinators:
Gerald Graff
415–948–6576
FAX 415–321–1192
email: graff@casbs.stanford.edu

Gregory Jay
414–962–9582
FAX 414–962–3435
email: gjay@csd.uwm.edu

Newsletter Editor:
John K. Wilson
1414 E. 59th St. #867
Chicago, IL 60637
312–753–0460
email: jkw3@midway.uchicago.edu

Provisional Steering Committee:

Steve Fuller	Patricia Ramsey
Jane Gallop	David Shumway
Barbara Gold	James Slevin
Dominick LaCapra	Judith Stacey
Amy Lang	Dan Tompkins
Donald Lazere	Mark Tushnet

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Ellen Messer-Davidow
Richard Yarborough

Newsletter Layout: Reid Huntsinger

HELP TDC!

WE DESPERATELY NEED your money to continue producing *Democratic Culture* and coordinating the other activities of TDC. We ask our current members to send us a check to renew their membership for 1994-95 (no form is needed). And we ask those receiving *Democratic Culture* for the first time to please send us a donation and join TDC in order to get future issues of this newsletter (use the form on page 2 or the back page). Please encourage friends and colleagues to become members. Without your support, we won't be able to continue our work.

Join TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE was formed in 1991 and currently counts over 1,700 teachers, students, and scholars as members. TDC supporters come from almost every discipline in the humanities and social sciences and include members in the professions, such as law and medicine.

During its first years, TDC worked hard to counter the negative portrayal of feminism, multiculturalism, literary theory, cultural studies, and other academic innovations by government officials and the media. We were especially concerned about the direction of the National Endowment for the Humanities under Lynne Cheney. But we were very encouraged by the excellence and diversity of the most recent appointments to the NEH's Advisory Council under Sheldon Hackney.

While time and Clinton's election took some of the immediate heat out of the "political correctness" wars, teachers and students around the nation still find themselves under attack by well-funded ideologues from the Right, including the National Association of Scholars. Meanwhile, many feel the time has come to take seriously some of the complaints about excesses by partisans on the Left. Often the debate among various disputants creates more heat than light, as rigid positions get set in concrete. While TDC has been generally supportive of much of the new scholarship and reform policies, it remains committed to fostering self-criticism and dialogue.

Toward these ends, TDC publishes *Democratic Culture*, a newsletter that keeps members up to date about happenings in academia and provides a forum for spirited debate.

We hope that you will join TDC with the membership form below. Or simply send your name and address, along with whatever donation you can afford, to **Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204**.

Excerpts from the original statement of purpose of Teachers for a Democratic Culture:

Colleges and universities in the United States have lately begun to serve the majority of Americans better than ever before. A vociferous band of critics has arisen, however, who decry these changes and seek to reverse them.

It is our view that recent curricular reforms influenced by multiculturalism and feminism have greatly enriched education rather than corrupted it. It is our view as well that the controversies that have been provoked over admissions and hiring practices, the social functions of teaching and scholarship, and the status of such concepts as objectivity and ideology are signs of educational health, not decline.

Yet because the mainstream media have reported misinformed opinions as if they were established facts, the picture the public has received of recent academic developments has come almost entirely from the most strident detractors of these developments.

It is time for those who believe in the values of democratic education and reasoned dialogue to join together in an organization that can fight such powerful forms of intolerance and answer mischievous misrepresentations. We support the right of scholars and teachers to raise questions about the relations of culture, scholarship and education to politics—not in order to shut down debate on such issues but to open it. It is such a debate that is prevented by discussion-stopping slogans like "political correctness."

We need an organization that can not only refute malicious distortions but also educate the interested public about matters that still too often remain shrouded in mystery—new literary theories and movements such as deconstructionism, feminism, multiculturalism and the new historicism, and their actual effects on classroom practice.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

JOIN TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE WITH THIS FORM

The continuing growth and success of TDC depends on your involvement and your contributions. We ask all current TDC members to send in a check (no form is needed unless you have changed your address) to cover 1994-95. We also encourage non-members who have received this newsletter to join us. Please mail this membership form to: **Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston IL 60204**.

__Yes, I want to become a member of TDC __Yes, I want to renew my membership in TDC

Enclosed is my 1994-95 contribution of: ___$50 ___$25 ___$5 (students/low-income)

Name_____

Department_____ School or Affiliation_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Home Address (if preferred)_____

Phone Numbers: Business_____ FAX_____ Home_____ E-mail_____

Newt Gingrich 101

John Wilson

REP. NEWT GINGRICH (R-Ga.) brings a new meaning to "political" correctness in his college course called *Renewing American Civilization*. When asked by a campus newspaper if the class would "have a balance of liberal ideas," Newt said, "No. I'm going to allow Democrats but not liberal ideas." A Gingrich spokesperson, Allan Lipsett, explained that "liberal ideas" would not be allowed in the course because "liberal ideas have failed." According to Lipsett, if "you're teaching a cooking course, you teach how to produce a good dinner. You don't teach your students how to produce a bad dinner." Chef Newt adds: "People who disagree with me have every right to teach their own course...I have no obligation to clutter the course with people who I regard as explicitly wrong."

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* called the class "a new low in political cynicism" and editorialized, "These statements, plus Mr. Gingrich's reputation for the bitterest kind of partisanship, make clear that his course will be an exercise in propaganda, not education. But it will be paid for in part by all taxpayers—liberals and conservatives—who bear the burden of the tax deduction his political supporters receive for defraying the course' expenses."

Much of the $291,000 needed to put the course on satellite came from businesses who supported Newt's political campaigns. For the corporations, Newt 101 offered a tax-deductible form of political lobbying. One $25,000 contributor was Cracker Barrel, a restaurant chain infamous for firing gay and lesbian employees. Cracker Barrel's political action committee also contributed to Gingrich's re-election campaigns, as did other Newt 101 donors—Healthsouth Corporation, Southwire Corporation, and Associated Builders and Contractors.

This connection between political lobbying and higher education can be explained by the involvement of GOPAC, a political action committee run by Newt which raised $2.6 million in 1992 to recruit and assist Republican political candidates. GOPAC's executive director, Jeffrey Eisenach, became the director of Newt's class, assisted by two other former GOPAC staffers. GOPAC sought out major contributors and sent a mailing to College Republican groups around the country, telling them that "the recent tribulations of the Clinton Administration have made all of us feel a little better for our short-term prospects," and going to explain the need for a long-term Republican vision provided by *Renewing American Civilization*.

According to Newt, GOPAC had "the most incidental involvement." But Newt admits, "I took all the help I could get...I wanted people near me, helping me, who I know and trust....they're the best fund-raisers I know." Newt never addressed the ethical and legal problems of having a political action committee raise funds for a non-profit foundation supporting a college course.

The *Atlanta Constitution* reported that Richard Berman, a lobbyist with the Employment Policies Institute—a restaurant trade group which crusades against minimum wage laws—donated $25,000 to help pay for the class and added a handwritten note at the bottom of his letter, saying: "Newt, Thanks again for the help on today's committee hearing."

Berman, an old friend of Newt, had asked for help to get an appearance at a Congressional committee hearing on drunken driving, which Newt obligingly provided. Both Berman and Gingrich deny that the donation was a payment for his assistance. "It was a dumb thing to write on the note," Newt admitted, saying that he immediately called Berman because "I wanted him to understand there were no circumstances involving any *quid pro quo*. If he had any confusion about that, I told him I'd send the check back."

But Berman's influence with Newt was apparently not limited to Congressional hearings. Pamela Prochnow, GOPAC's finance director and a Newt 101 staffer, reported in a May 10, 1993 memo about a meeting with Berman, who said he might make a contribution of $20,000 to $25,000 "if the course can incorporate some of the ideas" that "entry level positions are not necessarily dead end."

Later, along with the $25,000 check for Newt 101, was a note from Berman reporting that he had given the project director "information that you can use for program material" and adding, "I'm delighted that it will be part of your lecture series."

Perhaps it's no coincidence, then, that Newt's introductory essay in the readings for *Renewing American Civilization* features this statement: "Entrepreneurial free enterprise is not only a source of personal success and economic prosperity. It is central to our success as a civilization. How many people consider that McDonald's has the most powerful job training system in the world? More young people get more entry level training in McDonald's than anywhere else."

How about that? Flipping burgers at McDonald's is the essence of American civilization. Isn't it amazing what you can learn in college?

Gingrich (who was a history and geography instructor at West Georgia State College before he became a politician) taught the class at Kennesaw for free because House members are limited from receiving compensation for teaching positions and state law prohibited elected officials from serving as state employees. However, the money that would have paid the instructor was instead used to hire a marketer to promote the class.

In response to complaints, the Georgia Board of Regents amended its policies to prohibit elected officials from teaching at state colleges or universities, whether or not they are paid. In 1994 Gingrich moved the class to Reinhardt College, a small private school in Waleska, Georgia.

Newt rejected the accusations of political bias: "I believe it will withstand comparison with any course being offered by those who complain. I would be glad to match our syllabus and our reading list with any requirement in the system." But John Willoughby, director of the American Studies program at the American University, examined the syllabus and concluded, "I think it's obviously designed to push his own political perspective."

There are other indications that *Renewing American Civilization* has more of a political purpose than an educational one. Newt told the *Atlanta Constitution* that he hopes the class will shape presidential campaign debate in 1996 and help him recruit 200,000 campaign workers. Newt explained, "It's not partisan, it's political...there's a difference."

Still, the worst thing about *Renewing American Civilization* isn't the hint of political corruption, or even the blatant political bias revealed in the syllabus and Newt's comments. What is truly objec-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

tionable about Newt Gingrich 101 is its lack of intellectual content and its low academic standards.

The syllabus includes an impressive (although entirely conservative) list of 300 books for further reading, but no one actually needs to read them: the sole required reading is a 226-page, large-type collection of 10 essays. Any thoughtful conservative I know would be too embarrassed to recommend this book to a student or a friend, let alone require it as the sole reading material for an entire class.

Newt's own essay in the book is rife with typographical errors that magnify the inanity of his words: "American Civilization is in fact a more powerful, a more humane, and a more desirable form of civilization that [sic] the alternatives."(4) "We in the modern age cannot appreciate the importance of George Washington because his importance did not stem from a brilliant I.Q. or a charismatic speaking style or any of the other indices of [sic] by which we tend to judge people."(8) "In education, we will explode the capacity of humans to educate themselves and to learn without having to show up at school during certain hours."(14) "We can restore the melting pot by becoming a country in which every immigrant learns English and everyone is expect [sic] to become, habitually and by practice, an American."(17) Maybe Newt and his editors should be first in line to learn English, if they're not too busy melting and exploding everyone else.

Many of the other essays in the book read like New Age Republican psychobabble: "The highest human performance potential is realized when people kindle and nurture the 'fire within.'"(43) "The capability to think and act with independent strength is first necessary before *interdependent* synergy can be effective."(49)

Arianna Huffington (wife of a Congressman) offers a "twelve-step program" for American renewal, as if we are suffering from some kind of cultural alcoholism. According to Huffington, "Our evolution has always depended on the few preening forward from stage to stage. Any new principle of existence must first establish itself in the few and then, once a critical threshold is reached, it mysteriously and automatically spreads to the many."(220)

Other writers give us standard Republican blather, blaming the "the current Administration" for bad economic policies that are "shuffling cash from taxpayers to the underprivileged."(157-8) George Gilder tells us, "Greed is actually less a characteristic of Bill Gates, the Chairman of Microsoft, than of Harry Homeless. Harry may seem pitiable. But he and his advocates insist that he occupy—and devalue—some of the planet's most valuable real estate."(61)

Students were asked in one mailing to "commit" themselves to *Renewing American Civilization*, and Huffington's concluding essay declares, "Our strategy should be to do much more than merely 'contain' the culture of confusion—we must roll it back: intellectually, artistically and commercially."(224)

Newt Gingrich 101 isn't going away. Newt plans to teach it this spring, and again in 1996. But one wonders if *Renewing American Civilization* is really a course committed to intellectual debate, or if Newt's real aim is to spread his personal propaganda and mobilize a legion of followers to enhance his future political ambitions.

For more information on teaching Renewing American Civilization *at your college, contact the Progress and Freedom Foundation, 1800 Parkway Place, Suite 315, Marietta GA 30067.*

John K. Wilson is a graduate student at the University of Chicago and editor of Democratic Culture.

Generation at the Crossroads

Paul Rogat Loeb

PC-baiting could not have succeeded had America's national media questioned the truth of the distorted, exaggerated, and fraudulent examples that they so blithely passed on—examples repeated in article after article. A variety of thoughtful rebuttals did challenge the rhetorical stampede. (Many of the best articles are collected in Patricia Aufderheide's *Beyond PC: Towards a Politics of Understanding.*) But rarely did they appear in major national venues. Their presence was limited, rather, to liberal-left publications of modest circulation, to scattered newspaper editorial pages, and to periodicals aimed at the academy itself. In contrast to the attacks of the PC-baiters, they were barely visible. The phrase "politically correct" has become a taken-for-granted phrase in American culture, used to describe everything from citizens taking out their recycling to enforced niceness in everyday speech.

Do the PC attacks raise any legitimate questions? As I've described, activist students have their flaws. Because their task is difficult, they sometimes grow judgmental, bluntly shutting down those who disagree with them. They sometimes separate themselves from important historical perspectives, dismissing rich and vital literature as the mere testaments of dead irrelevant white men. Their efforts to address America's profound divisions, of race, sex, and class, leave them at times off balance or awakward. Inevitably, they take some false steps, which the critics then attack.

How else do student activists fall into the traps that conservatives have so effectively caricatured? Some do wrestle to absurdity over how to make their words inoffensive to all possible groups. At times this creates their own perfect standard of language, and it can leave newcomers so afraid they'll have to act and talk a certain precise way, that they balk at getting involved. Other activists voice their arguments for social change in language so opaque and jargon-encrusted as to almost set themselves up for attack. The politics of racial and sexual identity can often factionalize. At a time when poor and minority communities have been devastated by America's political and economic choices, a sense of outrage and solidarity can make it tempting to vent frustration on targets close at hand, such as university professors, administrators who may or may not be culpable, or equally beleagured white working-class students. It can be tempting to justify questionable actions in terms of clear larger wrongs. Students often need to draw support from their specific communities and to build on common experiences and understandings. But when they judge whether people are trustworthy solely on the basis of skin color or gender, they veer onto dangerous turf.

Yet such flaws are peripheral to contemporary student movements. They occur largely at their margins and affect mostly those directly involved in the cause. Although they sometimes make the important work of these movements more difficult than necessary, by no stretch of the imagination do they cast the kind of intellectual and emotional chill over their campuses that the PC-baiters describe. Real issues exist behind the caricatures, but the hype of the critics has made them harder, not easier to address.

Paul Loeb's new book is *Generation at the Crossroads: Apathy and Action on the American Campus* (Rutgers University Press, 1994).

My Date With Dinesh

Michael Bérubé

I LEARNED TO be extremely wary of Dinesh D'Souza from the moment I entered the fray over the PC wars, when he asked the *Village Voice* for a retraction of my claim that he had, during his editorship of the *Dartmouth Review*, published stolen correspondence from members of Dartmouth's Gay Student Alliance. D'Souza's behavior leaves me skeptical as to whether the political opponents of the cultural left can be reached by appeals to "intellectual honesty" at all.

The episode itself dates from 1981, but it is D'Souza's conduct in 1991 that principally concerns me here. On 13 May 1991, David Corn reported in the *Nation* that D'Souza had maliciously "outed" some gay students at Dartmouth. After failing to get a full retraction from the *Nation*, D'Souza wrote a second letter: "My friends tell me not to waste my time because I should expect lies from the 'loony left.' I hope I am not naive in holding you to a higher standard."

D'Souza also wrote to the *Village Voice*, in more measured tones:

> Michael Bérubé, in a June 18 article, alleged that while I was the editor of The *Dartmouth Review*, I "proudly published the stolen private correspondence of Dartmouth's gay and lesbian students." This claim, which was first printed by *The Nation*, is false. Indeed, when presented with the facts, *The Nation* retracted the claim.
>
> What really happened was this: the *Review*'s article concerned the Gay Student Association [sic] as a college-recognized and -funded group. The article named the five officers of the group who were listed with the college's Committee on Student Organizations [sic]. Such listing is a requirement for funding and the names are open to public scrutiny. No other names or identities were revealed, and all the information in the article came from the public file.
>
> Later, one of the officers named claimed he was not affiliated with the group, and had been erroneously named. Apparently, the young man was not openly gay, but made the error of accepting an officer's position with the group, thus putting his name on the public record. The *Review* was in no position to know this and regretted in print having named the young man.

By the time the *Voice* apprised me of D'Souza's letter, I had gotten in touch with both David Corn and Victor Navasky of the *Nation*, wanting to know the status of their initial report and what they called its subsequent "clarification and amplification." Corn sent me copies of the documents D'Souza had sent him, and I dug up an old story I recalled having been published in the *New York Times* about the time I graduated from college. And here's where the story gets weird.

D'Souza's entire letter was contradicted *by the very documents he had sent to Corn*, which clearly showed that the *Review*, in an article under D'Souza's name, had in fact published excerpts from students' correspondence—as well as photocopies of official and unofficial GSA documents, whose legal-pad scrawls revealed the name and official position of the student who had requested that the *Review* not associate him with the GSA. I then made a few phone calls to Dartmouth, and soon I had the text of my reply to D'Souza, which ran as follows:

> What really happened was this: D'Souza's May 18, 1981 *Review* article also included anonymous excerpts from what he called "personal letters from students confessing their gay sentiments." The *New York Times* revealed D'Souza's source later that year, when it reported that some "membership and correspondence files of the Gay Student Alliance disappeared from the College Center, and...were printed in the *Review*." Dolores Johnson, former director of Dartmouth's Council on Student Organizations, confirmed to me that none of D'Souza's information could have come from a "public file," because "no administrative office keeps lists of the membership of, or letters to, any student organization." (David Corn, in the July 8 *Nation*, retracted his earlier "Correction and Amplification.") And what can D'Souza possibly mean by saying the *Review* "regretted in print having named the young man"? D'Souza offered no apology; on the contrary, he intensified his previous allegation—by publishing facsimiles of the stolen documents. His only sentence of regret was "We are sorry that it has come to this." I cannot guess why D'Souza has now chosen to heap one distortion atop another. But I fail to see how any responsible person can continue to take D'Souza seriously. Conservatives should begin shopping around for a more credible representative.

Because of the *Voice*'s strict space limitations, I could not go on to say that D'Souza, however unwittingly, drove one student he named to contemplate suicide as a result of the *Review* story on the Gay Student Alliance; nor could I comment on the cockiness with which he demanded a retraction from the *Nation*, proclaiming that he knew he would meet with "lies from the loony left."

Within a few days, I got a call from Paul Berman inviting me to reprint my article in his collection *Debating P.C.* I gratefully accepted the invitation, whereupon Berman informed me that I would have to strike the reference to D'Souza and the Gay Student Alliance, since D'Souza was contesting the allegation—again, despite his having just released proof that the allegation was quite true. When it became clear that Berman would not consider reprinting the piece unless the "questionable" allegation was dropped, I dropped it.

I still don't know just what I think of my own unpleasant introduction to the world of PC polemics and professionalized political hypocrisy, but I suggest that the mentality that gave us a D'Souza to attack academe is the same mentality that gave us a Clint Bolick to attack Lani Guinier on issues of racial justice, and a Quayle to attack Clinton's "hypocrisy" over Vietnam. Academic critics must, when attacked, engage the arguments of their attackers, and we can even give them credit where credit is due, when they criticize something worth criticizing. But it's well to remember that in Republican Washington, circa 1981-92, and on the D'Souza-Cheney axis of the culture wars, "debate" is conducted by rules that most academics—and most responsible citizens—don't recognize.

Michael Bérubé teaches English at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) and is co-editor of *Higher Education Under Fire: Politics, Economics and the Crisis of the Humanities* (forthcoming). This essay is excerpted from his book, *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics* (Verso, 1994).

Stolen Feminism?

John K. Wilson

IN *WHO STOLE Feminism?*, Christina Hoff Sommers claims that a well-funded conspiracy of feminists has deceived the public by misusing research and spreading their lies to gullible journalists and students. But Sommers' book contains the very failings which she accuses feminists of committing: basic factual mistakes, manipulated data, misrepresentation of surveys, exaggeration of results, abuse of opponents, and condemnation of anyone who fails to conform to her ideological goals.

Sommers rarely comes to grips with the intellectual ideas of feminists, selectively quoting them to serve her thesis as she does with Sandra Lee Bartky: "Nevertheless...the disciplinary practices of femininity...must be understood as aspects of a far larger discipline, an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination."(230) But Bartky actually wrote: "Nevertheless, insofar as the disciplinary practices of femininity produce a 'subjected and practiced,' an inferiorized, body, they must be understood as aspects of a far larger discipline, an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination."(75) Sommers makes Bartky's view seem more extreme by removing the important qualifier "insofar as."

Sommers also uses quotations selectively when she writes about Alison Jaggar: "It is now commonplace for feminist philosophers to reject the Enlightenment ideals of the old feminism. According to the University of Colorado feminist theorist Alison Jaggar, 'Radical and socialist feminists have shown that the old ideals of freedom, equality and democracy are insufficient.'"(23-24) But Sommers omits what Jaggar writes next: "Women are not free as long as their sexuality is male-defined and as long as they cannot make their own decisions to bear or not bear children. Women are not equal with men as long as they are forced to do a disproportionate amount of childcare, maintenance work and nurturing." It is difficult to believe that any "old feminists" would argue with Jaggar's "radical" beliefs, since the fight for the right to use contraceptives was one of the most important movements of the "old feminism."

Sommers dismisses feminist work in extreme terms, declaring that historian Blanche Wiesen Cook "had just released a book in which she claimed that Eleanor Roosevelt was really a lesbian."(20) This is a gross distortion of Cook's research, which revealed that Roosevelt had "intimate friendships with two lesbian couples" and "passionate friendships" with both men and women. Cook never wrote that Eleanor Roosevelt was a lesbian. The fact that Sommers misrepresents Cook's book in order to ridicule feminism indicates a disturbing attitude toward lesbians which is reflected later in the book, when Sommers warns parents not to send their daughters to certain women's colleges where "she may change her appearance, and even her sexual orientation."(91)

Trying to refute the fact that adolescent girls disproportionately suffer a decline in self-esteem, Sommers writes:

> Anne Petersen, a University of Minnesota adolescent psychologist, recently summarized the opinion shared by most clinicians and researchers working in adolescent psychology: "It is now known that the majority of adolescents of both genders successfully negotiate this developmental period without any major psychological or emotional disorder, develop a positive sense of personal identity, and manage to forge adaptive peer relationships at the same time they maintain close relationships with their families."(144-5)

But Petersen never meant that boys and girls are equally depressed, and writes later in her article:

> All the evidence suggests that increases in depressive disorders and mood are greater for girls than for boys during adolescence (e.g., Kandel & Davies, 1982; Kashani et al., 1987; Petersen, Kennedy, & Sullivan, 1991). The gender difference that emerges by age 14-15 years appears to persist into adulthood. Many scholars have considered whether the gender difference is a true difference in depression or whether it can be explained by artifacts such as different styles of responding to questions and differences in openness. These examinations have concluded that the gender difference appears to be a true difference in the experience of depression (Gove & Tudor, 1973; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987; Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1991; Weissman & Klerman, 1977).(*American Psychologist*, 2/93, 158)

Sommers quotes another scholar immediately after Petersen: "Roberta Simmons had said very much the same thing: 'Most kids come through the years from 10 to 20 without major problems and with an increasing sense of self-esteem.' If Petersen and Simmons are right, the AAUW's contentions are an expensive false alarm."(145) But Sommers overlooks the fact that the same article summarizes Simmons' finding that "many girls entering junior high and high school did experience drops in feelings of confidence and self-satisfaction." How seriously can we take Sommers' claim that girls show no drop in self-esteem when the authorities she quotes explicitly contradict her thesis?

A similar distortion of research occurs when Sommers looks at domestic violence. Sommers declares that "the large majority of batterers are criminals"(198) and "violent male sociopaths"(199) based on a Massachusetts study which found that 80 percent of male subjects of restraining orders had criminal records. But Sommers fails to point out that the men who have restraining orders filed against them represent a very small—and probably extremely violent—proportion of all batterers.

Sommers also claims that "battery may have very little to do with patriarchy or gender bias," quoting Claire Renzetti who "studied the problem of lesbian violence and summarized the findings in *Violent Betrayal: Partner Abuse in Lesbian Relationships*: 'It appears that violence in lesbian relationships occurs at about the same frequency as violence in heterosexual relationships.'"(199-200) But Renzetti also reports in her book that she used a self-selected sample and stated "my study was not designed to measure the abuse in lesbian relationships."(19) Renzetti added, "It is doubtful that researchers will ever be able to measure accurately the prevalence of homosexual partner abuse."(19) The one study cited by Renzetti which compared heterosexual and lesbian relationships "showed that the male partners of the heterosexual respondents perpetrated a greater overall number of

aggressive acts than the female partners of the lesbian respondents."(18)

Trying to refute Naomi Wolf's theory of the beauty myth, Sommers quotes one study which claimed that "thumbing through popular magazines filled with beautiful models may have little immediate effect on the self-images of most women."(233, 301) (But predictably, Sommers omits the researchers' next sentence: "Still, one clearly cannot rule out potential effects of long-term media exposure to cultural standards of beauty.") Ironically, Sommers blames these same fashion magazines for indoctrinating young women: "*Mirabella* and its ilk foster misandrism by introducing many a teenager to the resenter mode of male/female relationships."(304) Sommers should make up her mind—either fashion magazines are powerful agents of the feminist conspiracy or they are powerless to affect women's self-image.

Sommers tries to attack Mary Koss' survey on rape by claiming it was flawed by a question about unwanted sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol. According to Sommers:

> Koss now concedes that question eight was badly worded. Indeed, she told the *Blade* reporters, "At the time I viewed the question as legal; I now concede that it's ambiguous." That concession should have been followed by the admission that her survey may be inaccurate by a factor of two: for, as Koss herself told the *Blade*, once you remove the positive responses to question eight, the finding that one in four college women is a victim of rape or attempted rape drops to one in nine.(213)

This is false. The one in four figure drops to one in five—not one in nine—when the question is removed, as Sommers could have easily discovered in Koss' scholarly writings. By comparing the one in four figure (which includes attempted rapes) with the one in nine figure (which does not include attempted rapes), Sommers is simply deceiving her readers.

Sommers has admitted her error and (like Naomi Wolf did with the 150,000 anorexia deaths) corrected her mistake in a later printing of the book. But Sommers still claims, "When you remove the alcohol question and subtract from the survey's results all the women who did not believe they were raped, the incendiary 'One in Four' figure drops to between one in 22 and one in 33." However, the 27% who called what happened to them "rape" should be increased to at least 41%, since 14% of the women described the attack as "a crime but not rape," and clearly they regarded it as a form of sexual violence.

Moreover, Sommers conveniently omits many other important findings by Koss, such as the fact that 84% of the women tried to reason with the attacker, 70% put up some form of physical resistance, and 64% were held down—strange behavior for consensual sex. Perhaps most tellingly, Sommers offers no challenge to the other questions in Koss' survey, such as: "Have you had sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) to make you?"(211)

It is ironic that Sommers attacks the AAUW survey for relying on students' self-reports of how they feel about themselves (something they know well), but when she turns to rape surveys, Sommers believes that women's self-reports about rape (a legal definition which many do not know) must be taken as gospel. The fact that only 11% said they were not victimized indicates a high level of sexual violence.

Sommers also argues that these women could not have been raped because 42% had sex with their attacker again. But by this same logic, battered women who remain with their attackers—even for a short time—were not really beaten. It is a sad fact that 41% of the rape victims in Koss' survey expected to be raped again. And it is sadder still that Sommers uses the widespread acceptance of sexual violence as an excuse to deny its existence.

In addition to misrepresenting feminist research, Sommers distorts feminist teaching. Sommers never bothers to step inside women's studies classrooms (her book discusses exactly one class focusing on gender, which Sommers "enjoyed"), but her ignorance does not stop her from concluding that "much of what students learn in women's studies classes is not disciplined scholarship but feminist ideology."(51, 106) Although Sommers mentions nothing about talking to students who like taking Women's Studies classes, she has no doubt that they are all "intolerant of dissent."

While Sommers attacks women's studies for influencing the lives of students, Sommers herself has described how she altered her teaching when she found that "my classes were doing nothing to change" her skeptical students (*Christianity Today*, 12/13/93, 35). Sommers begins by claiming that feminists censor their students, but she urges the elimination of classes she dislikes: "That an instructor invites or even allows her students to 'speak out' about personal affairs is an unfailing sign that the course is unsubstantial and unscholarly."(100)

As one example of feminism's "ideologically correct censorious revisionism,"(269) Sommers tells the story of how Goya's *The Naked Maja* was removed from a classroom. But Nancy Stumhofer reports in the Spring 1994 *Democratic Culture* that she was upset not by the painting but "when I heard some of the male students laughing and making comments to each other" about it while she tried to teach. Sommers says Stumhofer "filed formal harassment charges against those responsible for the presence of the painting for creating 'a chilling environment.'"(270) But Stumhofer notes, "The truth is that I never claimed I had been sexually harassed by the painting," and no charges were filed by anyone. Sommers tell us: "Goya's painting has been removed."(271) She doesn't mention that the painting was moved to the Student Center where it now has greater public access.

Sommers' attack on feminism is often based on errors and misconceptions. She accuses the University of Maryland of "screening" presidential candidates for their feminist views. But according to University of Maryland president William Kirwan, "the Committee did not 'question' the candidates in the manner or with the agenda described." And contrary to Sommers' claim that "Kirwan came through with $500,000 of the university's funds for a curriculum transformation project, without going through the faculty senate to do so,"(119) Kirwan reports that $350,000 was allocated for programs to recruit and appoint more women faculty, and to encourage high school women to pursue careers in science, mathematics, and engineering, along with a summer curriculum project to help faculty include material about women in courses—which cost $100,000, not the $500,000 reported by Sommers.

Sommers also exaggerates the influence of feminists and multiculturalists on the curriculum. She cites the 1989 study, *What Do Our 17 Years Old Know?*, noting that "more high school students recognized the name of Harriet Tubman (83%) than Winston Churchill (78%) or Joseph Stalin (53%)." But students were most knowledgeable about traditional history subjects—more than 85% could iden-

tify Thomas Edison, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Adolf Hitler, and the locations of Italy, the Soviet Union, and the 13 original states on a map. Some of the lowest scores dealt with women and minorities, including the 1970s women's movement (23%), the Seneca Falls Declaration (26%), and Jim Crow laws (31%). In the literature section, students got the highest scores on Shakespeare (68%) and the Bible (67%), but a failing grade for questions on the literature of women and blacks (49%).

Sommers' distortions go back into history when she claims, "The 'rule of thumb,' however, turns out to be an excellent example of what may be called a feminist fiction."(204) But the "rule of thumb" was mentioned in at least five early American legal cases, and no historian would deny the existence of a common law standard which accepted the right of husbands to moderately beat their wives.

In *Bradley v. State* (1824), the Mississippi Supreme Court suggested that this rule of thumb might be "narrowed down...without producing a destruction of the principle itself." In *State v. Rhodes* (1868), the husband was found not guilty of whipping his wife three times because of the "rule of thumb." The North Carolina Supreme Court overturned the decision, modifying the "rule of thumb" without repudiating it: "We will no more interfere where the husband whips the wife, than where the wife whips the husband."

In *State v. Mabrey* (1870), the same court rejected the "rule of thumb," but even in a case where "death was threatened," the court carefully noted that "the Courts will not invade the domestic forum, to take cognizance of trifling cases of violence in family government," a doctrine repeated in 1874: "in order to preserve the sanctity of the domestic circle, the Courts will not listen to trivial complaints." In 1908, the court summarized the long history of the law's tolerance for wife-beating: "It is true that for the aforesaid purpose of 'drawing a veil over dealings between man and wife,' for long centuries the husband was held authorized to inflict personal chastisement upon the wife, provided 'no serious bodily harm or permanent injury were inflicted,' or, as some decisions phrased it, 'if the rod used was not larger than the husband's thumb.'"(*State v. Fulton*)

Sommers' claim that these "rule of thumb" cases "were not representative of mainstream judicial opinion in the rest of the country" is refuted by numerous courts which tolerated wife-beating as "trifling violence." Assault on a wife was rarely prosecuted, and wife-beating did not always constitute grounds for divorce. The Alabama Supreme Court observed in 1862, "There are circumstances, under which a husband may strike his wife with a horse-whip, or may strike her several times with a switch, so hard as to leave marks on her person, and these acts do not furnish sufficient ground for a divorce." Courts in Iowa, Alabama, New Hampshire, and Louisiana refused divorces to beaten wives because her "highly unbecoming" language, "her own conduct," or her "bold masculine spirit" justified the abuse.

Sommers' distortion of history extends back to Blackstone, who did reject the right of husbands to beat their wives but was certainly not repudiating a feminist invention; he was arguing against an old common law standard which plainly existed in the past and, as Sommers quotes Blackstone, still persisted: "Yet [among] the lower rank of people...the courts of law will still permit a husband to restrain a wife of her liberty in case of any gross misbehaviour."(205) What Sommers conceals from her readers with the ellipses was that the "lower rank," according to Blackstone, "were always fond of the old common law" and "still claim and use their ancient privilege," which disproves Sommers' argument that "Blackstone plainly says that common law prohibited violence against wives."(205)

Sommers also removed the section of Blackstone's commentary which referred to an older law allowing husbands to beat their wives with whips and sticks. In response to criticism, Sommers now claims, "I omitted that because its content had already been paraphrased in the preceding language which I did quote: 'The husband by the old law might give his wife moderate chastisement.'" But what average reader would know that "correction" and "chastisement" actually meant beating, as Sommers readily admits it did?

Sommers now argues, "the phrase 'rule of thumb' nowhere appears in Blackstone's discussion of wife beating." But the old common law which legalized wife-beating bears a strong resemblance to the rule of thumb, as Elizabeth Pleck notes: "Blackstone decried the old common-law doctrine that a husband had the right to beat his wife with a whip no bigger than his thumb."

Sommers may be accurate in claiming, "the phrase did not originate in wife beating." But when feminists discuss the "rule of thumb," they are not engaging in a debate about linguistic origins. Feminists are reporting the fact that wife-beating was accepted throughout Anglo-American history, as represented in extreme form by the "rule of thumb." Out of 14 examples given by Sommers in which feminists discuss the rule of thumb, all of them refer to wife-beating, but less than half even mention the origins of the phrase "rule of thumb"—and at most only a couple of these incorrectly suggested that wife-beating was the sole source of this idiom.(204, 206-7, 295-6)

Sommers attacks the "rule of thumb" "fiction" because it "is supposed to bring home to students the realization that they have been born into a system that tolerates violence against women."(203) Sommers wrongly denies that the Anglo-American legal system has tolerated violence against women, but unfortunately, Sommers' false attack on the rule of thumb has proven influential. The *Cleveland Plain-Dealer* (7/26) reports that Rep. Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) will no longer mention the "rule of thumb" because it is "not true" and "apocryphal."

Perhaps the greatest irony is that Sommers' idol Elizabeth Cady Stanton, in her 1854 speech to the New York Legislature (which Sommers quotes as a model of equity feminism), declared: "By the common law of England, the spirit of which has been but too faithfully incorporated into our statute law, a husband has a right to whip his wife with a rod not larger than his thumb, to shut her up in a room, and administer whatever moderate chastisement he may deem necessary to insure obedience to his wishes, and for her healthful moral development!"

Sommers concludes her book by declaring that "feminism itself—the pure and wholesome article first displayed at Seneca Falls in 1848—is as American as apple pie, and it will stay."(275) The question is whether we are satisfied with the first steps to formal equality made a century ago, or whether we are determined to continue moving forward toward the true equality which feminists like Stanton envisioned as their ultimate goal.

Christina Hoff Sommers fails in her efforts to deny the existence of acquaintance rape, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and domestic violence, and *Who Stole Feminism?* is a deeply flawed book—not because it "dares" to challenge the feminist "orthodoxy," but because it distorts scholarly research and feminist views in order to tear down a straw person called "gender feminism."

Sommers and Her Conspiracies

John K. Wilson

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS has a long history of making absurd charges about feminist conspiracies against her. Sommers' first foray into the culture wars was an accusation that a course proposal form at Clark University amounted to a "loyalty oath" because it asked teachers, "Insofar as it might be relevant to the content of the course, please explain how pluralistic views are explored and integrated in this course." It is a sign of Sommers' relentless desire to discover a conspiracy of the thought police that she described a harmless request for information as a "loyalty oath."

In late 1991, Sommers presented herself as the victim of this feminist conspiracy when she wrote to the professional journal of the American Philosophical Association, charging that feminist philosophers "transgress the norms of intellectual exchange," and accusing them of "the suppression of or the attempt to suppress my minority standpoint."

Sommers accused Sandra Lee Bartky of trying to "discredit and muzzle me" because Bartky had written to the editor of *Atlantic Monthly* urging him to choose a more responsible reporter than Sommers to write about feminism due to "Sommers's inaccurate and unscrupulous presentation of views with which she disagrees." In a second example, a *Forbes* editor asked Alison Jaggar about Sommers' summary of her ideas, and Jaggar told him it had "elementary misunderstandings, distortions or misrepresentations." Sommers' third example of her oppression is Naomi Scheman, who told a reporter off the record that Sommers was a "dangerous woman" because she "had displayed a lack of scholarly integrity in the past in her accusations against feminists"—although Sommers similarly calls feminists "irresponsible and dangerous."(97)

Sommers' fourth example of being "suppressed" was the failure of the *Newsletter of Feminism and Philosophy* to print a response by Sommers to an essay written by Marilyn Friedman—even though Sommers never sent in her response or contacted the editor until after the deadline for the issue had passed.

These are flimsy grounds upon which to build a claim of suppression, especially considering that Sommers herself has not been open to criticism. She tried to prevent the *Journal of Social Philosophy* from running a rejoinder by Marilyn Friedman to their exchange of articles, and she also tried to prevent the publication of Friedman's letter next to her own at the beginning of the argument in the APA *Proceedings*. And when some letters critical of Sommers' wild charges were printed, she called it "an Orwellian campaign of hatred against a dissident voice." Sommers even falsely accused editor David Hoekema of trying to censor her.

The effort to depict Sommers as a helpless victim of the feminist conspiracy requires a great deal of exaggeration and sometimes outright invention, as Richard Bernstein does in his new book, *Dictatorship of Virtue*. "The APA *Proceedings*, in two issues, published a total of 44 pages of responses to Sommers's letter, every page negative. There was not a single word of support for Sommers. Forty-four pages of hostile responses to Sommers's letter, from writers who claimed that nobody did exactly what, in writing those letters, they were doing!"(120) In fact, in two years the APA *Proceedings* printed 21 letters (32 pages) from Sommers and her supporters, and 17 letters (31 pages) from Sommers' critics.

While Sommers accuses feminists of "*ad hominem* opprobrium and political censure," she shows no reluctance to attack her opponents in similar terms. In her articles, interviews, and letters, Sommers says feminists "are people with serious [psychological] problems" and calls feminism "a protected species," "embracing a closed perspective," "extreme," "angry," "in constant agitated communication," and "dishonest and unworthy." She calls feminists "patronizing and condescending," "uniformly tiresome," "offensive," and "irrational and violent," with a "distinctly misogynist attitude" and a "perverse insistence on rape." Feminism, she claims, is "a powerful cult" guilty of using "invective," "bullying tactics," "avoidance tactics," "intellectual excesses," and "*ad hominem*" arguments.

Sommers' supporters compared feminists to Hitler and Mussolini, attacked them as "emotional" and "McCarthyist," urged the APA to "close down the feminist newsletter," suggested that Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, and Alison Jaggar suffer from "a mental disorder," called feminist philosophy "pathetically incompetent," and compared the APA journal to *Pravda* for printing letters critical of Sommers.

Sommers' abuse of her opponents and invention of feminist conspiracies against her has continued with the publication of *Who Stole Feminism?* For writing a negative review, Nina Auerbach was attacked by Sommers and villified by conservatives across the country. Auerbach and the *New York Times Book Review* were falsely accused of conspiring to destroy Sommers' book.

Rush Limbaugh told his audience that "militant gender feminazi feminism" and the *New York Times* were trying "to kill this book" by "reacting hysterically." Conservative columnist Suzanne Fields declared, "So dangerous is this book that the *New York Times Book Review*, a coven of gender feminists, assigned it to someone the author had earlier attacked."

Hilton Kramer of the *New York Post* (6/14) called it a "deliberate attempt to annihilate an important new book on feminist politics" and "a major intellectual scandal." Jim Sleeper in the *New York Daily News* (6/13) directly accused Auerbach of lying. Sommers herself led the fight, calling the media to make ridiculous claims that Auerbach had "recognized" herself and used the review to "settle scores," and accusing Auerbach of "professional malfeasance" for her review.

Yet Jean Elshtain and Mary Lefkowitz favorably reviewed the book for the *New Republic* and the *National Review* without anyone criticizing the fact that both are praised in *Who Stole Feminism?* as "distinguished figures."(131-2) Why was Nina Auerbach attacked for reviewing a book which didn't mention her, while supporters named in the book (like Cathy Young for *Commentary*) were not challenged at all asbeing "biased" reviewers?

While Sommers condemns feminists for believing in "conspiracy" theories about the power of patriarchy over women, she believes that a conspiracy of feminists is out to destroy her. This issue of *Democratic Culture* may be dismissed like other criticisms of Sommers, even though we openly asked for submissions. When I invited Sommers to respond to some of the essays, she declined after learning that the writers she criticized would—as is common practice—have an opportunity to respond:

"I won't be participating. The format you suggest is unjust and unconventional. Normally, when A's work is criticized by B, C, and D, A gets to respond. And that is the end of it. But I see you have in mind that B, C, and D should get a second go at me. That is what Catharine MacKinnon colorfully calls a gang bang. Include me out."

94 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Christina's World

Nina Auerbach

I SHOULD HAVE been suspicious when the editor of the *New York Times Book Review* was so cajoling, assuring my answering machine that this book was "perfect for me." I have wondered since how many women were smart enough not to review *Who Stole Feminism?* Because I had never heard of Christina Hoff Sommers, and because I thought *Who Stole Feminism?* might be an authentic articulation of my own doubts about some feminist pieties rather than the right wing-instigated attack missile it is, I agreed to review it.

I was repelled by the book from the outset and became more so as I read on. I knew, too, almost from the outset, that Sommers would make trouble if I wrote a bad review: as author, she brags about being a troublemaker—for unsuspecting participants in the feminist conferences she infiltrates, for the Women's Studies teachers and administrators she travesties (often on the basis of anonymous hearsay), for women's colleges, and for the members of the organizations she "debates" on TV (she reports in the book of being a dependable anti-feminist advocate on any talk show that will have her). She seems, however, less an ideologue than a loose cannon, proud of her ability not to refute, but to disrupt. In this spirit, *Who Stole Feminism?* is a comprehensive battle cry against all aspects of academic and political feminism, one bulging with statistics (many of which have now been challenged or refuted), but devoid of social analysis. The book spreads itself so thin and reveals so unrelenting an animus that in my opinion it would lose credibility even to a reader who never heard of feminism. No matter what one's politics, this is, for me at least, an ugly book, one that aims not to analyze or to correct, but to poison the wells.

As author, Sommers flaunts her right-wing connections. Without the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Carthage Foundation, and the John M. Olin Foundation, she could not, she claims, have written her book, a tribute that makes me suspect that the real spirit behind *Who Stole Feminism?* is less Sommers' than that of the conservative foundations who funded her lavishly. She inserts fulsome (but contextually irrelevant) tributes to such better-known anti-feminist women as Camille Paglia and Katie Roiphe. Like all bullies, Sommers as author hides behind others' authority. She seems concerned less with women's issues than with ingratiating herself with the extreme right wing.

Sommers lauds the "traditional" scholarship she claims feminists are undermining, but her primary frame of reference is media exposure and talk shows. Only incidentally and superficially does she mention the books of either friend or foe. Her implicit assumption that books and reading are obsolete, that scholarship and politics are reducible to sound bites at conferences or in magazine interviews, made me certain that I hated *Who Stole Feminism?* I fear I am the true traditionalist, for when talk shows rather than books become the central authorities, my hackles go up.

When I was halfway through, I considered returning the book unreviewed, not because I'm represented in it—I'm not (I was a speaker at one of the many conferences she caricatures, although she ignores my rather unpolitical paper)—but because I could find nothing in the book to praise and the situation smelled of trouble. My editor at the *Times* and my conscience goaded me to persevere: it seemed cowardly to suppress my opinion, and moreover, I am a compulsive finisher of projects once I have begun to work on them. Had I thought a conflict of interest was involved, as Sommers would later insist, I would probably have leapt at that excuse to get out of the assignment.

But there was never anything self-serving about my hatred of this book. Politically, I am committed to feminist issues, but by 1980 I had become disenchanted (though never in Sommers' terms) with the feminist criticism that was an all-too-respectable presence in English Departments. Over the years, I have expressed this disenchantment in writing, lectures, and interviews: I was and remain depressed by the clannishness of the field, the fixation of most feminist critics on each other and on the latest theoretical trends, to the exclusion of the social and political inequities we began by challenging. I have done my best to detach myself from this or any critical school, and to write simply as my own woman. I expressed my sense of detachment (and hinted of my disenchantment) in my book *Romantic Imprisonment*, which the *Times* reviewed in 1986, along with an interview in which I dissociated myself from academic or political labels. I suspect it was this publicly-expressed disengagement that made the *Times* choose me as Sommers' reviewer.

Sisterhood Is Fractious

Excerpts from Nina Auerbach's review in the *New York Times Book Review* (June 12, 1994)

Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women is so overwrought and underargued that it is unlikely to amuse or persuade. Sommers asserts that "American feminism is currently dominated by a group of women who seek to persuade the public that American women are not the free creatures we think we are." That "we" creates a community of readers who may not exist, for Ms. Sommers' attacks are so indiscriminate that hers is a book only for the already disaffected.

She deplores the evolution of something she calls "equity feminism" into something she calls "gender feminism." These categories are slippery, particularly the second, since she crams many women into it who on the face of it disagree with one another, from the women's historian Gerda Lerner to the psychological theorist Carol Gilligan to the president of NOW, Patricia Ireland.

• • • • • •

Gleefully citing critiques of women she dislikes, Ms. Sommers doesn't stop to draw the obvious conclusion: Like the rest of America, feminists in particular and academics in general are far from monolithic, but fractious, self-critical and, in most cases, ready to change with the times.

Talk shows, conferences (their academic equivalent), magazine interviews, feminist Internets and other sound bites are Ms. Sommers' primary sources. She cites few actual books; a sentence quoted from Kate Millett's long and difficult *Sexual Politics* is attributed to "the back cover."

• • • • • •

Contemporary feminism is certainly open to criticism, but it deserves a more informed adversary. Ms. Sommers only touches on the antipornography movement. Since the crusade to ban pornography does, I think, make feminism vulnerable to Ms. Sommers' charge of thought-policing, I expected her to cover this widely publicized issue in depth. Had she done so, she would have encountered fierce debates among feminists that reveal not the totalitarian invaders she tries to depict but the women of America.

Who Stole Feminism? is the only book of the fifteen I have reviewed for the *Times* that deals with feminism. For the record, the only identifiably feminist book I've reviewed for a non-academic publication is Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity* (for *The Nation* in 1987), which I disliked almost as much as I did *Who Stole Feminism?*, and said so. Bram Dijkstra could easily have invented conspiracy theories about me, but he behaved like a colleague and a pro and said nothing. His book is still enjoying a critical and commercial success that easily surmounted my criticism.

Probably Sommers' book will be the last one on feminism I'll review. Ironically, if any informed reviewer were to like this book, I would have been that reviewer. But I am close enough to her academic material to know how skewed her accusations are and the worth of what she is trying to destroy. I know several of the gifted women she insults and most of the books she belittles; her arbitrary caricatures demean not only academic and political work by and about women, but the exhaustive reading and multi-faceted analysis I think of as scholarship.

My problem writing the review was to exorcise Sommers' high-decibel invective from my own style, for the unremitting antagonism in *Who Stole Feminism?* grated on me more than its message. The anti-feminist message could be repudiated, or at least debated, but as with so much right-wing rhetoric, the intensity of its vindictiveness is stupefying. With the help of three patient friends—none of whom had heard of Sommers—I tried to chisel my anger into something like cool precision.

The review was carefully vetted, first by my friends, then by my wonderfully savvy editor on the *Book Review*, and I assume too by the editor-in-chief, Rebecca Sinkler. The *Times* was scrupulous in ascertaining that every criticism I made had a clear basis in Sommers' book; anything questionable was altered or cut. Sommers and some columnists on rival newspapers would later claim that the *Times* and I conspired to kill her book, but the *Times*, with my willing cooperation, did everything to ensure that I wrote not about my own distaste but about the book at hand.

Nevertheless, I wasn't entirely surprised when the first call came, from Jim Sleeper on the *New York Daily News*, on the Thursday before the review actually appeared. I was surprised, almost titillated, when he said grandiosely that everyone in New York was talking about my review. This would have been a first. Since 1983 I had reviewed some fourteen books for the *New York Times*. Some were by distinguished authors, and two became actual best-sellers; but even when I was less than reverent to a famous name, no one noticed what I said. I tried to suppress a flattered grin, because I knew something bad was coming, but in my most paranoid fantasies I could not have anticipated what followed.

Not: "How could you be so cruel to a beginning author?" Not: "Are you a politically correct feminist?" But: "*Did you teach Christina Sommers' stepson?*" At that point the ground seemed to open, for I never remember the names of my students or, in fact, of most people (I had probably heard and forgotten Sommers' own name, since a few years ago she tried to incriminate as "politically correct" one of my female colleagues at Penn who *had* taught her stepson—also on the basis of a statistically-based comment on said stepson's term paper). Moreover, since I had been on leave for six months, my grade book had disappeared in the welter of my office. I was lost in the horror of being an inveterate name-forgetter caught out. I burbled something from my guilty abyss.

My sense of nightmare intensified when Jim Sleeper told me that Sommers had called every newspaper in the country (with the help, I should think, of a well-organized phone bank), proclaiming that I "recognized myself" in her book, not as feminist ideologue or seditious writer and reviewer, but as the University of Pennsylvania professor who had written on the margin of her stepson's term paper: "Even today women make only 59 percent of what men make!"(238)

Once more I was abashed: I am as fuzzy about numbers as I am about names. I stammered quite honestly that I don't know any statistics so would never cite them to a student (or anyone). Perfidy was

The Choice of Nina Auerbach

Rebecca Sinkler

NINA AUERBACH, WHO reviewed Christina Hoff Sommers' book, is an author and professor of English literature at the University of Pennsylvania. She has reviewed frequently for th. *Times Book Review* over the past decade or so, and she has proven to be a fair, accurate, and reliable critic. Not only that, she is on the record as being against many of the excesses of the feminist movement, especially on college campuses. In other words, she's not PC.

Auerbach also knows a great deal about the subject of women's studies, since she has been teaching for two decades and has watched the discipline as it has developed from its beginnings in the 1970s. We at the B*ook Review* thought she would be a good critic for *Who Stole Feminism?*, a book that supports equality for women but attacks certain practices and positions of certain feminists—what Sommers calls "gender feminists."

Auerbach is a good and lively writer, and she can be outspoken in her views. We like that in a reviewer. She read *Who Stole Feminism?* and took issue with what she saw as errors, contradictions, and overstatements of various kinds. All in all, she was sharply critical of the book.

No one who has charged her with bias has found anything inaccurate in her review. Those making the charges are basing them on an inaccurate report in a New York newspaper that claimed Auerbach was named in Sommers' book and should have recused herself as a reviewer. The *Book Review* received many letters asking us why we would assign the book to someone named in it. The answer is, we wouldn't. Auerbach isn't named in *Who Stole Feminism?* and she would not have reviewed it if she had been. Sommers has said that in one chapter she was writing about Auerbach, but there was no way Auerbach could have known that. Auerbach did participate in one of the many large women's studies conferences that Sommers attended and wrote about negatively, but scores of women attended the conferences Sommers attacks. And attending a conference does not mean one agrees with everything that goes on there.

Auerbach is known as a contrarian, and a critic of academic feminism in its sillier manifestations. We at the *Book Review* knew that from reading what Auerbach has written and from speaking with her personally.

Rebecca Sinkler is the editor of the New York Times Book Review. *An earlier version of this essay appeared as an email response on America Online's New York Times service, @Times.*

credible to this reporter, but not ignorance. After hounding me about the term paper for awhile, scarcely mentioning either Sommers' book or my review, he hung up and wrote in an inflammatory column that I was lying: I *had* written the PC statistic on her stepson's paper, and knew it. A friend suggested I should be grateful that Jim Sleeper had the courtesy to telephone me, but since he invented most of the statements he attributed to me, he needn't have wasted his time. The issue to Sleeper and to subsequent columnists became, not politics, scholarship, feminism, her book, or my review, but their attempts to get me to acknowledge an anonymous comment Christina Sommers claimed was on a term paper no one in the press ever asked her to produce. This marginal comment became a source of authentic terror. As in Sommers' own book, with its hectoring emphasis on chance remarks made at conferences or on talk shows, the tangential had triumphed. I knew that since I don't think in numbers, I would never cite such a statistic, though I refused to repudiate someone's right to do so. My credibility hung on this marginal and unprovable remark.

The Monday after my review appeared, the switchboards of the *Times* were jammed with angry phone calls, urging Rebecca Sinkler to disclaim my review. She, it turned out, knew less about Christina Sommers than I did: I had at least read the book and knew the brackish waters I was swimming in, but when the calls poured in, Rebecca was bewildered and appalled. For a bad few hours, the burden of proof was on me to defend my integrity as reviewer. I fated a self-defense to the *Book Review* and waited nervously for the verdict. If the *Times* bowed to pressure and publicly disclaimed my review, I would, I knew, be professionally tarnished thereafter. I knew how Zoë Baird and Lani Guinier must have felt as they waited for word from President Clinton after smear campaigns had spat them, unrecognizable, at his feet. Suddenly I was no longer a designated authority, but a lone target forced to defend myself against mad accusations that seemed to be coming from everywhere.

My fate was happier than Lani Guinier's. Partly, I suspect, because Rebecca Sinkler, like all of us, had watched and winced as the Senate and then the President let themselves be bemused by this sort of smear campaign, my review was not disclaimed. I was exonerated of the more Byzantine charges that I "recognized" myself as the anonymous butt of her caricature. Had Sommers lied less stupidly, bringing in larger, more important issues than my own self-interest; had I not had a twelve-year association with the *Book Review*; had the pressure on the *Times* been less boorish—I might have fallen into the abyss reserved for those whose book reviews are disclaimed and their authority taken away.

At this writing, Rush Limbaugh has called me a feminazi; I have been the radical feminist villain in four newspaper columns by indignant men. Most of these columns dwell on the offending term paper comment, though some claim as well that I knew Sommers criticized my conference paper without mentioning my name—despite the fact that she is addicted to naming names and criticizes no papers anonymously from that particular conference. No reporter has requested a copy of my paper to check against the quotations in her book. Sommers' defenders in the press give me the Cassandra feeling that I alone have actually read *Who Stole Feminism?* The *Times* published some angry and suspiciously similar letters, none of whose writers admitted to having read the book, and I answered them as coolly as I could. So much, I hope, for my brush with the organized right.

I am unnerved, though, by this instance of political correctness on the right, its power to enlist the media and to throw even the *New York Times* into a defensive tizzy. Why does an author whose book was panned have more credibility than the reviewer? If a feminist or any other progressive didn't like a book review, could we jam the phone lines of the *Times*? Would columnists listen or cry, "PC!"? Where, in any case, are our phone banks? Whom could we enlist to champion an unread book?

As a literary critic, I am especially disturbed by the pervasive disdain for the actual book. Not only did Sommers' defenders, the letter-writers or the reporters, show no symptom of having read *Who Stole Feminism?*, but there were no substantive complaints about the content of my review: the issue was deflected from anything Sommers or I said in print to undemonstrable personal attacks on me. As a reviewer, I have tweaked distinguished noses from Frank Kermode's to Stephen King's; none of them knew I was there. If they or other successful authors had taken issue with my or any review, they would have looked guilty of petty egotism or bad sportsmanship. Who endows Christina Sommers with an authority granted to no established author?

Most writers of first books—especially those with no endorsements by established writers on the cover—are glad to get any reviews at all, much less a review in the *Times*. Nevertheless, against all the rules of the literary game, an army of workers exerted itself to protect her book against my criticism. The muscle used to discredit me and the *New York Times* goes beyond the issue of a book review. It is an action taken against books in general, against freedom of speech, and against scholarship.

Nina Auerbach teaches English at the University of Pennsylvania.

New York Times Book Reviewer —or Feminist Dragon Lady?

While most mainstream reviews of Sommers' book were mixed or favorable, Auerbach's *Times* review was sharply critical. But the critical review ended up putting Auerbach, not Sommers, on the spot.

The fact is that Auerbach is not named in the book, and she denies any conflict of interest. Nevertheless, the claim was taken serious by prominent media critics like the *Washington Post*'s Howard Kurtz (6/16/94).

Auerbach feels she was plugged into some journalists' pre-written scripts: "A lot of the media wants to push this book, wants the feminist dragon lady, i.e. me, to be the villain, and there were a couple of articles saying, 'How dare they get Nina Auerbach, a well-known radical historian.' And I'm a literary critic. I mean, they could have at least sort of mentioned my books. They even got my field wrong."

—Laura Flanders, *EXTRA!*, September/October 1994.

The *Times* asks reviewers whether they know of any reason why they shouldn't accept an assignment. Auerbach had such a reason, but she didn't tell. That's surprising, because she insisted to me that "It's a lousy book, it doesn't deserve any attention." Why review it, then?

When I posed this question, Auerbach's deer-in-the-headlights response was deep denial: "I don't think I taught this boy." Told that she had, indeed, taught Tamler Sommers, Auerbach said that a teaching assistant must have written the offending comment. Maybe, but does she doubt she's the one Sommers is attacking? Yes, she says, and I don't believe her.

Auerbach's editors surely didn't know that Sommers was writing about her. But they do know better than to assign any book that slams an academic subculture to a prominent member of that subculture. Or don't they?

—Jim Sleeper, *New York Daily News*, June 12, 1994.

The Big Lie

Linda Hirshman

THE WEEKS SINCE O. J. Simpson's arrest for murder have witnessed an explosion of debate about domestic violence. With a conference committee of Congress considering the Violence Against Women Act as part of the crime package, the subject commands unprecedented attention. Sadly, much of the debate has been sullied by the willingness of the political right to engage in wild misrepresentations. Some of the people engaged in this process also bring their credibility as teachers and scholars to the exchange. To find academics presenting skewed information to the public casts doubt on the whole enterprise of scholarship, a doubt that will last long after the current debate is over.

This misrepresentation of the numbers is just the most recent variation of the Big Lie technique much in vogue among the debunkers of gender violence. Christina Hoff Sommers, an associate professor at Clark University in Massachusetts, published a book, *Who Stole Feminism?*, claiming that the common-law doctrine of the "rule of thumb," which allowed a man to beat his wife if he used moderation, as in a stick no thicker than a thumb, is a "feminist fiction." Conservative columnists John Leo and Mona Charen glommed onto this assertion and crowed about how newspapers and television stations had been taken in.

There's only one problem: It's Sommers who is wrong. There are at least three 19th-Century American cases referring explicitly to the "rule of thumb" (*State v. Oliver*, *State v. Rhodes*, and *Bradley v. State*). Sommers knew about the cases because she refers to the two that convicted the husband anyway. But she never mentions the case that let the husband off.

Sommers also didn't do her homework. The cases and the articles about the rule of thumb refer to the universally accepted authority on old English common law, William Blackstone. Sommers looked at Blackstone's *Commentaries*, she says, in which Blackstone found that the common law prohibited violence against wives. She even cites a volume in her footnotes. A real scholar would ask how all those 19th-century state court judges who refer to Blackstone could have been so mistaken.

The answer is that Sommers must have been looking at some sort of condensed version of Blackstone that left off the Latin parts, perhaps for the benefit of the common modern reader. Her quotation stopped right in the middle of a sentence. In the real volumes of Blackstone, available in many libraries, a husband's right in the old common law to moderate chastisement of his wife is there in black and white. Violence is allowed, Blackstone says, if it "lawfully and reasonably belongs to the husband for the due government and correction of his wife." Blackstone even talks about the limits on the permission in civil law to use scourges (whips or straps) and sticks. Perhaps Charen and Leo also lack libraries.

Regardless of one's politics, we must ask ourselves whether the truth of gender relations is so terrible that it must be concealed with a curtain of lies.

Linda Hirshman teaches law and is director of the Women's Legal Studies Institute at the Chicago Kent College of Law. This essay appeared in longer form in the July 31, 1994 Los Angeles Times.

"The Baron may beate his Wife"

"If a man beat an out-law, a traitor, a Pagan, his villein, or his wife it is dispunishable, because by the Law Common these persons can have no action: God send Gentle-women better sport, or better companie."

—*The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights: or, the Lawes Provision for Woemen* (1632), p. 128.

IN RESPONSE TO Hirshman's article, Christina Hoff Sommers wrote a letter (8/13/94) in which she declared:

> Weighing in for the feminists, Hirshman says that my book *Who Stole Feminism?* used "the Big Lie technique," when, in the middle of quoting Blackstone, it omitted a bit of Latin that talked of the old law that allowed a husband to "lawfully and reasonably" use force in "correcting" his wife. I omitted that because its content had already been paraphrased in the preceding language which I did quote: "The husband by the old law might give his wife moderate chastisement." Hirshman commits an interpretive whopper since she evidently reads the omitted Latin as giving Blackstone's opinion. Not so: Blackstone mentions the "old law" only to point out that it had been superseded in his own "politer" day (1768): "A wife may now have security against her husband." That is Blackstone's view.

Sommers added:

> So my three major points remain: 1) Blackstone's opinion is that violence against wives is no longer legal; 2) the phrase "rule of thumb" nowhere appears in Blackstone's discussion of wife beating, and 3) the phrase did not originate in wife beating. (Authorities have traced its origin to 17th-Century English woodworkers who expertly used their thumbs for quick rough measurements.)

In conclusion, Sommers challenged Hirshman

> to cite the statutes in American law justifying the feminist claim that our laws (not one or two sexist judges) sanctioned wife beating by a stick no bigger than the husband's thumb. There is no such body of actual law. Historically, the American legal system—albeit imperfect and imperfectly enforced—offers women the best protections of liberty and person to date. Feminist revisionist legal history—not my rejection of it—is the Big Lie.

LINDA HIRSHMAN REPLIES:

I recently criticized Associate Philosophy Professor Christina Hoff Sommers for her unscholarly misrepresentations of the facts about domestic violence. By her letter, Associate Professor Sommers continues simply repeating her false assertions. Relentlessly repeating falsehoods for political ends is a very dangerous strategy to follow, as 20th century history has amply showed.

False: Common law permission to beat your wife is a feminist fiction.

True: In the formative period of our legal system, husbands were allowed to do serious violence against their wives without cost.

False: Unlike all other feminist scholars, Christina Hoff Sommers is a uniquely reliable source on all aspects of gender.

True: Sommers' contentions on legal feminism are amateurishly sloppy and inaccurate.

What nonlawyer Sommers calls "bits of Latin" not important enough to bother with are the actual old cases (the writs) permitting the violence. These Latin writs embodied the old English common law authorities allowing the husbands to beat their wives as necessary. Put another way, in legal history, as in life: *Cases are law. Numbers are facts.* All the rest is commentary.

Beyond Polemic

Jonathan L. Entin

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS apparently has never heard of Otis Dudley Duncan. When confronted with some silly ideas, that distinguished demographer concluded that it would be better "to pass over these matters in silence in the hope that neglect will be better medicine for this infection than polemic."

Polemic unfortunately reflects the style of much contemporary public discourse, which frequently takes to extreme lengths the Supreme Court's view that debate should be "uninhibited, robust, and wide open." Duncan did not always opt for silence. He devoted his career to pioneering research rather than vituperative essays, which suggests that there can be a more measured response to objectionable ideas, one that tries to generate light rather than heat.

This brings us to Professor Sommers, who doesn't much like contemporary feminism. Concluding that she could no longer remain silent, she has written a polemical book, *Who Stole Feminism?*, and readers have chosen up sides along predictable ideological lines.

As a bystander to recent debates among my colleagues in the arts and sciences, I was struck most strongly by Professor Sommers' sharp distinction between what she calls equity feminists, whom she approves, and those she characterizes as gender feminists, whom she excoriates. Some of the most important influences on my professional development have been distinguished women. I suspect that they would see fewer stark contrasts and more differences of emphasis than she does.

Amidst her vehement and frequently hyperbolic condemnation of gender feminism, she does raise some important questions and point out some obvious mistakes.

More important, I was struck by Professor Sommers' almost antiseptic account of equity feminism. At times I sensed not very subtle suggestions that the problems women face are inconsequential and that anyone who views the glass as still half (or maybe one-quarter) empty is willfully blind to the reality of ineluctable progress. This comes through, for example, in her discussion of the nineteenth-century origins of equity feminism,(33-35) the presentation of women in textbooks,(56-58) and trends in earnings differentials between men and women.(241-42)

But equity feminism has been neither complacent nor demure. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, whom Sommers invokes as preferred models, condemned the Fourteenth Amendment because one of its provisions protected only "male" voting rights. And Lucretia Mott, who broke with them to support the Fourteenth Amendment despite that provision, once audibly objected when the official presiding at a wedding pronounced the couple "man and wife" rather than "husband and wife." (Compare Sommers' criticism of gender-feminist students who correct their teachers in the classroom (107).)

Consider also the litigation campaign for women's rights that won a series of Supreme Court cases beginning in the 1970s. Professor Sommers would probably characterize Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who played a major role in those efforts, and the other lawyers involved in that campaign as equity feminists because they argued for sex-blind legal standards. But skeptical commentators, many of whom would hardly qualify as gender feminists, have questioned whether these victories really improved women's lot. Some of the cases were brought on behalf of male claimants and dealt with such seemingly trivial matters as differential drinking ages.

There was a coherent rationale for this approach, as now-Justice Ginsburg explained during her confirmation hearing last year. The women's rights lawyers drew much of their inspiration from the NAACP's anti-segregation litigation campaign that culminated in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Knowing that existing precedents were almost completely unfavorable, Thurgood Marshall sought to chip away at the doctrinal underpinnings of "separate but equal" until the propitious moment for a frontal assault.

The legal precedents for women were not much better, as anyone who has read Justice Bradley's paean to motherhood in rejecting Myra Bradwell's attempt to become a lawyer will appreciate. Over the years since 1873, judicial language had become more subtle but the results were hardly encouraging. Reasoning by analogy from the campaign against segregation, feminist lawyers brought a series of cases that questioned stereotypical notions of sex roles. Their male plaintiffs often took a much more active part in child care and domestic work than is true even today, and such superficially unimportant regulations as differential drinking ages often reflected distressingly patronizing assumptions about male-female behavior.

From this perspective, the distinction between equity feminism and gender feminism begins to blur. The women's rights lawyers concluded that traditional legal doctrine was so pervaded by stereotypical (male?) ideas that progress could be made only by packaging cases in unthreatening ways, such as by finding men to challenge apparently minor sex-based rules. Only after achieving success in those cases would it be possible to get the Supreme Court to treat more important sex-based classifications, like race-based ones, as legally suspect and therefore presumptively invalid unless supported by a compelling governmental interest. There would still be room to argue whether particular arrangements, such as special accommodation of pregnant workers, were permissible, but the burden of persuasion would fall on those seeking to justify different treatment rather than on those attacking it.

On the evidence from her book, unfortunately, Professor Sommers seems incapable of facilitating the sort of reasoned discussion that universities are supposed to promote. She often appears primarily intent on scoring rhetorical points against those with whom she disagrees. She cannot even resist inserting a few personal digs against Naomi Wolf while congratulating her for moving away from gender feminism.(245)

Nevertheless, some of Professor Sommers' points deserve a more thoughtful response than the tone of her argument might invite. Amidst her vehement and frequently hyperbolic condemnation of gender feminism, she does raise some important questions and point out some obvious mistakes. We ought to take these matters seriously even if we disagree with her position and find her tone less than constructive.

To take just one example, Sommers devotes six pages (203-08) to the etymology of the term "rule of thumb." Her purpose is to disprove the claim that this term originated as a rule of English common law,

transplanted to America, that a husband could beat his wife with a weapon no thicker than his thumb. This is, she says, a "feminist fiction."(204)

The claim has two elements. The first is that "rule of thumb" was first used in reference to the legal standard for wife-beating. Sommers consulted the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which traces the phrase back to the late seventeenth century to usages that have nothing to do with spouse abuse. I checked both the first and the second edition of the *OED* and found no references at all to that subject.

The second element is that, whatever the term's origin, the common law did allow husbands to beat their wives with thumb's-width sticks. Sommers finds no basis for this assertion in Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (which profoundly influenced early American law) and invokes the work of "historian and feminist" Elizabeth Pleck,(205) who wrote about American laws against wife-beating that date as far back as the seventeenth century. At the same time, Sommers does concede that there is "a small core of fact" in this element of the "rule of thumb" story.(206)

This account is reasonably accurate as far as it goes, although it omits what might be the only American case on record in which the "rule of thumb" was used to acquit a husband accused of wife-beating. But in correcting the mistakes of others, Sommers implies that those who disseminate this "feminist fable"(207) do so exclusively for ideological reasons. The true story is more complex. In summarizing that story here, I draw heavily upon an article by Henry Ansgar Kelly that will appear this fall in the *Journal of Legal Education*. Kelly reviews the origins of the term "rule of thumb" in reference to wife-beating, examines American sources, traces the authorities relied upon by Blackstone, and analyzes the extent of permissible wife-chastisement in English and Roman law.

Like Sommers, Kelly finds the first published claim that "rule of thumb" originated in English common law to be a 1977 paper by Terry Davidson. Unlike Sommers, Kelly suggests that Davidson's mistake arose from ignorance rather than ideology. He describes her as "a journalist with no evidence of legal or historical training." Her inaccurate account of the term's etymology has been accepted uncritically by scholars who should know better.

Of course, showing that the term "rule of thumb" did not arise as a precept of the common law is only part of the issue. The absence of any reference to this usage in the *OED* might simply reflect a coverage gap. More important is whether the law recognized the "rule of thumb" as a standard in wife-beating cases. Sommers refers to an 1824 ruling by the Mississippi Supreme Court (*Bradley v. State*) and an 1874 decision by the North Carolina Supreme Court (*State v. Oliver*), both of which unequivocally rejected the thumb standard while upholding convictions for spousal abuse. She correctly observes, however, that neither court found an absolute legal bar against violence toward wives.

Sommers misses an earlier North Carolina decision (*State v. Rhodes*) discussed by Kelly. In that 1868 case, the trial judge had explicitly relied upon the rule of thumb in dismissing a wife-beating charge. Kelly found no similar judicial ruling in any other reported decision. In any event, the state supreme court disavowed the lower court's reasoning but upheld the result because the case involved "trifling violence." This conclusion echoes Blackstone's notion that husbands enjoyed what Sommers calls "a measure of latitude in physically chastising their wives," a notion she characterizes as "not representative of judicial opinion in the rest of the country."(206)

It would be wrong to conclude that these old cases completely discredit the rule of thumb as a legal concept. There is a well-recognized distinction between law on the books and law in action. It is possible that people in the nineteenth century erroneously thought there was such a legal principle, as Terry Davidson did in our own time. Sommers never considers this possibility; Kelly does.

As late as 1941, in the first edition of his celebrated treatise on tort law, William Prosser referred to the rule of thumb in discussing the *Rhodes* case (although he dismissed that idea as a "legend" in a subsequent edition). A commonly cited 1917 law review article states the rule of thumb without actually using the term, and mistakenly adduces the two North Carolina decisions as authority for that proposition. Perhaps more significant, an American edition of Blackstone's *Commentaries* published in 1897 (at which point Blackstone himself had been dead for more than a century) inaccurately cites *Rhodes* as endorsing the rule of thumb.

This discussion suggests the following conclusion: To say that the common law countenanced some violence against wives does not necessarily mean that the "rule of thumb" represented the common law standard. The two propositions are neither equivalent nor logically related. We can endorse the first without necessarily accepting the second.

These references in respected and widely available legal works suggest the possibility that at least some members of the public assumed that the notion of "rule of thumb" had something to do with the permissible limits of husbandly authority. It is also reasonable to suppose that this assumption influenced the behavior of some husbands who might have regarded physical violence against their wives as acceptable and of law-enforcement personnel who might have found it difficult to attach very high priority to such behavior.

Sommers herself calls for better approaches to the problem of domestic violence. So what difference does it make that the term "rule of thumb" did not originate in English common law and that there is not very much legal authority of any kind relating this term to wife-beating? For that matter, why should we care about other exaggerations and errors that she points out? After all, mistakes are inevitable in discussions of highly charged subjects.

We should care for several reasons. As a matter of strategy, those who seek to persuade others should avoid basic mistakes that might call their overall credibility into question. Some of the errors Sommers notes, such as the etymology and significance of "rule of thumb," might seem trivial. Unfortunately, they can have a corrosive effect on public perceptions of those who purvey them. Moreover, they can also provide cheap rhetorical ammunition to critics. For example, I know of at least one conservative commentator (a woman) who used the controversy in the University of Minnesota's Scandinavian studies department to question whether sexual harassment allegations should ever be taken very seriously. If Sommers' account of that situation is remotely accurate,(114-15) we should all be troubled.

At a more fundamental level, getting things right has intrinsic value. If Sommers helps us do that, we ought to be grateful even though we find her general thesis unpersuasive. It's too bad that she so often seems more interested in scoring debater's points than in having a serious conversation, but that shouldn't prevent the rest of us from trying to understand the world more clearly.

Jonathan Entin teaches law at the Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

Failing at Fairness

Myra Sadker and David Sadker

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS debunks studies documenting gender bias in education with claims of "not peer reviewed." She has leveled these charges in numerous interviews, all designed to promote her new book, while killing the Gender Equity in Education Act now before Congress.

Her charge is bizarre. Our research has been reviewed by the federal government, by outside experts hired by the government, by the American Educational Research Association and by editors and editorial boards of professional journals. Hundreds of other studies document gender bias in education. Conducted by other researchers both here and abroad, many of these studies have been compiled in the AAUW Report and also have undergone professional reviews.

While we called our book *Failing at Fairness*, this title would fit Sommers attempt to distort and even reinvent reality. Sommers discusses our research in ten pages of her book, a section filled with inaccuracies, misleading innuendoes, or quotes in interviews that seem not to have taken place. For example, in her book she talks about a local school teacher who appeared with us on a *Dateline* television show. She was a wonderful teacher who agreed to let us (and all of America) into her classroom. Because of her courage and openness, viewers were able to see first-hand the subtle ways that gender bias operates and the willingness of teachers to improve themselves. Imagine our shock when we read in Sommers' book that this teacher thought that the program was a sham. We called the teacher who was dumbfounded by Sommers' characterization. Not only did she disagree with the remarks attributed to her—she thought it was an accurate program, not a sham—she says she did not grant an interview to Sommers.

A few paragraphs before, Sommers reports on a conversation between a professor and a doctoral student who was conducting research on gender bias in college classrooms. Sommers says the doctoral student told the professor he was "screwing up" her research because he wasn't biased enough. Again, we called the former student, who is also shocked by the description in Sommers' book. She points out that the research design for her doctoral dissertation prohibited her from talking with the professors she was observing. Moreover, the former student is certain that she was never interviewed by Sommers.

In 1992, we analyzed more than 400 studies concerned with gender bias, and we published that effort in the *Review of Research in Education*. This article was not only peer reviewed, but it also won the American Educational Research Association award in 1992 as the best review of research (not just gender bias research, but any research) published in the United States. In that exhaustive chapter, we never came across the name Christina Hoff Sommers. To the best of our knowledge, she has never published a single education research article, peer reviewed, semi-peer reviewed or unreviewed. Nothing. Educational research clearly is not Sommers' field. If it is an arena she wishes to enter, she should do her homework.

Gender bias is a subtle, usually unintentional, but persistent part of the classroom. More than twenty other studies show that boys receive more frequent and more precise attention. Sommers' attempt to discount the research and block passage of the Gender Equity in Education Act must not be allowed to succeed. As we document in *Failing at Fairness*, although girls begin school ahead of boys, by the time they graduate they are behind. On the PSAT and the SAT, girls trail boys. Boys outscore girls on 11 of 14 Achievement Tests, used for admission to the most selective colleges. Later, men score ahead on the Graduate Record Exam, the LSAT for law school, the GMAT for business school and the MCAT for medical school. Girls are the only group to begin school with a testing advantage and leave at a testing disadvantage. You don't have to be a researcher to know that this is a problem, and an issue of concern to educators, parents, citizens, and lawmakers.

> I called Ms. Lowe. She agrees with the *goals* of the Sadkers' research and believes teachers may exhibit unconscious bias. She herself took part in a teachers' presentation in support of the Gender Equity in Education Act. Nevertheless, she felt that the "Dateline" program was a sham. "That class was boy-heavy," she said. "Of course I called on more boys. A good documentary should tell you the proportion of boys to girls in the class. There were four or five more boys than girls." Moreover, she pointed out, the "Dateline" crew had filmed her for eight to ten hours, but only a few minutes were shown. Of course it was possible to find in all that footage some small sequence that appeared to show bias. "By that method," Ms. Lowe observed derisively, "they could document most anything."
>
> —Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism?*, p. 171.

Over the past two decades, with the moral encouragement of Title IX, girls and women have made substantial gains. We recognize and applaud that progress. But it is too early to declare victory and go home. The Gender Equity in Education Act can continue the moral momentum towards full educational equality. This is not the time to accept the smokescreen of those who believe that women already have come too far. This is the time to complete the journey.

Myra and David Sadker teach education at American University.

A National Course on the Culture Wars

TDC is developing a nationally-linked course on the culture wars for 1995-96. Please contact us to volunteer for the planning Task Force and/or to teach a version of the course at your campus (which may be an adaptation of a course you are already teaching). The idea will be to network teachers and students across the country who are doing variations of a common course.

If mainstream media took debate about feminism seriously, one might have seen Sommers subjected to more investigative questioning. Instead, she appeared virtually unchallenged on CNBC's *Equal Time* (7/15/94) with journalist/host Susan King and co-host Linda Chavez, former Reagan civil rights commissioner—who seemed to agree that "feminazis" do indeed exist.

—Laura Flanders, *EXTRA!* September/October 1994.

How Sommers Has Distorted Polls

Celinda Lake

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS challenges a poll we conducted for the American Association of University Women (AAUW) on the self-esteem of girls and boys as they progress from elementary school to high school.

We are very disturbed by her specious and misleading characterization of our work. In support of her conservative ideology, she has seriously distorted the facts. Indeed, of all our work, this is one of the polls of which I am most proud. The methodology and findings were reviewed at every stage by a panel of academic experts, consisting of Dr. Carol Gilligan of Harvard, Dr. Nancy Goldberger of the Fielding Institute, and Dr. Janie Victoria Ward of Simmons College, who also approved the final report. Their other work and the work of a number of academics in this field has agreed with our findings.

Sommers makes two specific charges about the way the poll was reported in the AAUW publication, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America: A Call to Action.*

With regard to the first charge, Sommers quotes the following statements: "In a crucial measure of self-esteem, 60 percent of elementary school girls and 69 percent of elementary school boys say they are 'happy the way I am.' But by high school, girls' self-esteem falls 31 points, to only 29 percent, while boys' self-esteem falls only 23 points to 46 percent."

Sommers then says that the publication "conveniently leaves out the fact that the numbers refer only to boys and girls who had checked 'always true' in response to 'am happy the way I am.' In effect [she says] the AAUW counted as 'unhappy' all respondents who had checked 'sort of true' and 'sometimes true/sometimes false.'"

In fact, the extremes or end points reported in the publication were simply used to illustrate the issues, not to draw conclusions based on one or two questions. Rather, the analysis looked at multiple indicators for repeated conclusions and used multiple methodologies, all of which came to the same conclusions.

There were a total of 92 questions in the poll, of which 26 were on self-esteem alone. A self-esteem index was constructed on the basis of such factors as a general sense of individual self-esteem, feelings of importance within the family, academic confidence, feelings of importance within the family, academic confidence, feelings of isolation, expressions of verbalization or voice, and feelings of acceptance by peers. The index was cross-referenced against several batteries of questions in areas such as school subjects, career goals, and gender differences.

It is common industry practice to illustrate by using the end points in responses. The differences in gender response were all statistically significant. The index—based on all 92 questions—showed a drop in self-esteem for girls that was more than three times as large as for boys.

With regard to the second charge, Sommers asserts, "The AAUW also failed to publicize the very awkward finding that African-American boys, who are educationally most at risk, score highest of all on the AAUW's self-esteem indexes."

Out of 3,000 children surveyed, only 600 were males. This sample size was large enough to report aggregate male data, but not large enough to break it down by ethnic background. It is irresponsible of Sommers to do otherwise. This illustrates the fact that Sommers is trained in philosophy, not survey research. I would gladly concede to her expertise on Plato if she would do the same on polling.

Sommers also offers the cheap shot that "it took me many weeks to get a reluctant AAUW to let me see their actual data." In fact, she got the full data after writing a letter requesting it, as did everyone else who received it. Nearly 100 scholars nationwide have the full data. In fact, AAUW is unusual because it has readily released the full data to many scholars; many researchers do not release their data at all.

What's the significance of our findings? The decline we have documented in girls' self-esteem may have a very real impact on their achievement and career choices later on. In a classic study, researchers Elizabeth Fennema and Julia Sherman found a strong relationship between math achievement and confidence. Their research revealed a drop in both girls' math confidence and their achievement in the middle-school years. The drop in confidence preceded a decline in achievement. Similarly, the AAUW poll found a circular relationship between self-esteem, liking math and science, and career aspirations. Students with higher self-esteem like math and science more, and students who like math and science are most likely to name professional occupations as their first career choice. Indeed, in my view, one reason the AAUW research had such an impact is that it resonated with the experiences of mothers and fathers and educators throughout the country.

Celinda Lake is a partner in the Washington, D.C. research firm of Mellman-Lazarus-Lake.

The Money Behind Anti-Feminism

Christina Hoff Sommers attacks the "generous funding" of feminists, but Sommers herself has achieved fame and fortune from her harsh attacks on feminism. According to FAIR, Sommers received $164,000 from three conservative foundations (Olin, Bradley, and Carthage) for her research, as well as a six-figure advance from Simon & Schuster. As Sommers admits, "I could not have written this book without their aid and cooperation."(8)

Sommers contrasts the "well-funded transformationist projects" of feminists with the National Association of Scholars: "The NAS has an office in Princeton, New Jersey, with a staff of six (two part-timers), a budget of $900,000, and a national membership of fewer than three thousand. In contrast to the transformationists, the NAS operates entirely on its own; no university supports it or offers it facilities."(128)

Entirely on its own? In 1991 alone, NAS received more than $682,000 from conservative foundations. The idea that NAS is an impoverished, unsupported group while its opponents operate in lavish wealth is quite amusing to those of us at Teachers for a Democratic Culture. TDC, with a membership of nearly two thousand, has a budget less than 2% the size of the NAS. We have no office, no paid staff, and we struggle to survive while NAS has the money to buy numerous full-page ads in national publications.

That's why we need the help of our members to continue existing. Please make sure you renew your membership now for the upcoming year. We depend on you to send us your check to:

Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204

Shining a Light on the Misrepresentation of Women's Studies

Ellen Messer-Davidow

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS claims that women's studies are unscholarly, "intolerant of dissent," and guilty of brainwashing students, and she singles out the University of Minnesota as an "extreme example" of "one of the more gender-feminized colleges."(113) Unfortunately, few in the media have challenged, let alone researched the validity of, Sommers' claims. For instance, a feature story by Maura Lerner and Anne O'Connor ("'U' classes are focus of feminist feud," July 21) in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* reported her charges as if they were accurate. They're not. Both Sommers and the story have badly misrepresented women's studies.

First, the story reports on only one of nearly 70 women's studies courses taught at many levels during the 1993-94 academic year. Although it mentions a few other course titles, it does not indicate that the majority of courses focus on intellectual matters specific to disciplinary and crossdisciplinary fields. The story criticized this one continuing education/extension course, "Woman: A Sense of Identity," for being too "soft" and political, thereby giving credence to Sommers' charge that most women's studies courses are unscholarly.

If the reporters had taken my course, "The Cultural Construction of Sex, Gender and Sexuality," they would have read approximately 80 pages a week, participated in class and small-group discussions, heard lectures, made a presentation to the class, and written a paper (12 pages for undergraduate students, 20 pages for graduate students) that was historical, critical, or analytical. Materials included biology, sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, psychoanalysis, literature, journalism, church documents, and advertising.

As for Sommers' allegation that women's studies professors suppress dissent and brainwash their students, I should add that the ground rules for my course are intellectual responsibility and personal respect: 1) students can assert or refute any position they wish, but must support it with examples, analyses, and arguments, and 2) they can critique a person's position and methods, but not attack her personally. If Sommers or the reporters had complaints about my course, they would not be that it lacked scholarship, diverse views, or rigorous analysis.

Conclusive evidence for or against Sommers' charges must be based on a much larger sample than these two courses. Sommers herself, when questioned during an interview on a Minneapolis radio show, said in defense of her charges against women's studies courses: "You know, it would make sense not to believe it until you see it because it's so astonishing, but I base this on incredible amounts of research, investigation." However, she examined only a handful of courses rather than a large and representative sample of the approximately 30,000 women's studies courses taught at colleges and universities across the country. The *Star Tribune* story, for its part, fails to evaluate her charges through careful research and analysis in this and other instances.

The story also gives credence to her charge of politics by failing to situate women's studies in its historical context. From its establishment in the 19th century, the American higher education system (with the exception of women's colleges) generally barred women from graduate training and faculty employment in all but the traditionally "female" fields (nursing, education, home economics); most disciplines excluded them as subjects of study or studied them only as examples of stereotypically "feminine" behavior. For the past 25 years, feminist scholars have investigated women's lives, recovered their contributions to public and private endeavor, and documented the varied forms of families, genres of art and literature, and other such typologies that the disciplines constructed narrowly by basing their generalizations on men's activities.

Women's studies research and teaching have enriched, not impoverished, our understanding of human beings and their cultures. Feminist advocacy of equal educational opportunity has extended, not diminished, our democratic principles and practices. While Sommers appreciates research on women's contributions, she declares that academic inquiry into the gap between democratic principles and oppressive actualities is "political." What is "political" are the attempts to foreclose such inquiry; if successful, they would limit the academic freedom of research and teaching.

Both Sommers and the *Star Tribune* reporters quote Michael Olenick's attack on his experiences in Women's Studies 101: "When I signed up for a women's studies class I expected to learn about feminism, famous women, women's history and women's culture...Instead of finding new insights into the world of women, I found...bizarre theories about world conspiracies dedicated to repressing and exploiting women."(102)

But Sommers and the reporters don't explain what "oppression" means and why it might be a valid academic subject. Many scholars, not just feminists, study oppression: some investigate how particular factors such as discriminatory laws affect individuals, while others investigate how rights, opportunities, and responsibilities are unequally distributed in society according to such social categories as sex, race and class. Critics of women's studies object to the latter approach. Yet, they would not insist that medical science study a disease's progress in individual patients but not its dispersal among populations. They would not insist that agricultural science consider how grain is grown but not how it is distributed. Olenick personalizes and sensationalizes "oppression" when he claims that feminists define it as a conspiracy; rather, feminists suggest that oppression results from

Manufacturing Political Correctness

To cite one more example of the conservative use of regulation to leverage change on liberalized higher education, then-Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander, with the help of conservative appointees to his National Advisory Committee on Accreditation (in particular NAS members Christina Hoff Sommers and Martin Trow), attacked the diversity standards of the Middle States Association. Alexander recommended that Middle States be de-authorized, that accrediting agencies be federally regulated, that credentialing be provided by a number of competitive agencies from which institutions may choose, and that institutional eligibility for federal student aid not be contingent upon accreditation. When Middle States agreed under pressure to make diversity standards optional for institutions, some commentators saw this "compromise" as the beginning of a federalization of peer accreditation. In light of cultural conservatism's agenda, these attempts to reconstruct higher education through judicial precedent and government regulation must be seen not as responses to left-wing political correctness but as steps in the implementation of the right-wing agenda.

—Ellen Messer-Davidow, "Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education," *Social Text*, Fall 1993.

particular ways of organizing and distributing social goods.

Both the story and Sommers impugn such feminist teaching methods as small-group discussions and sitting in a circle, but fail to explain that the row-lecture format was only widely institutionalized with the expansion of American higher education in the 20th century and was not adopted, for instance, by English universities which relied on the tutorial. Anyone who has attended a university knows that disciplines today draw from several methods those most appropriate for the course goals and size: students sit around a seminar table, make presentations to the class, hold intensive small-group discussion, take field trips, break up into teams, walk in threes and fours on hospital rounds, and work on individual projects. Anyone who has attended a class of 35 students knows the disadvantages of the row-lecture format: you see the backs of heads, don't hear all the comments, and feel slightly uncomfortable in the formally segmented space.

Women's studies research and teaching have enriched, not impoverished, our understanding of human beings and their cultures.

The story also repeats Sommers' criticisms of women's studies for promoting "self-esteem"—which certainly has been trivialized by talk shows and pop-psych books that sell it as the by-product of fad diets, makeovers and crash courses on talking up one's self to others. But "self-esteem"—which means we have self-respect, confidence and a fitting pride in our achievements—isn't inconsequential or easy to achieve when we all, as individuals, get plenty of negative feedback. Researchers have shown that the achievement of "self-esteem" is generally more difficult for women, than for men, in a society that devalues women, and it is relevant to education because it affects learning. We learn better when we speak up in class, trust our abilities despite occasional flubs, and take pride in our work. As a professor, I find that more female students than male students don't feel and act this way. Women's studies faculty try to help by encouraging female students to speak in class and by affirming their achievements.

Finally, I'd like to clear away a few more misrepresentations. Does the emphasis on women mean that women's studies—as Sommers charges—are "me studies"? No. We study men and male gendering, as well as women and female gendering, because the sexes and genders exist together in a relational system; to understand one, you have to understand all. Does it mean that we don't welcome and encourage male students? No, because equal opportunity and respect for both sexes require the participation of both; what we don't encourage is the refusal to investigate the problem of inequalities between women and men. Do exceptions invalidate generalizations about women and men? No, because every category supports both generalizations and exceptions; the fact that some women and many men are confident learners should not prevent us from working with those women and men who are not.

Professors of all persuasions are rethinking research and teaching—asking why, historically, the disciplines have selected some subjects for study and omitted others, why universities have admitted some people to higher education and excluded others, which methods of teaching are more or less effective, and how our choices have shaped the knowledges we study and the realities we live.

I wish that the *Star Tribune* reporters had been more aware of how their own choices shaped this story about women's studies. The version of women's studies they present as a "reality" seems to confirm the charges of critics like Sommers, but it is far from the truth; it is a misrepresentation produced by insufficient research, exemplification, and analysis.

More seriously, the story is part of a campaign to disseminate the misrepresentations originally produced by Sommers. She and her supporters are now busy promulgating these misrepresentations through conservative and mainstream. Here in Minneapolis, she was interviewed on the WCCO *Wes Minter Show* and defended in a *Star Tribune* op ed piece by Ian Maitland, a member (like Sommers herself) of the National Association of Scholars.

Let me repeat a particularly galling dialogue from the *Wes Minter Show* that featured the host, Sommers, and *Star Tribune* reporter Anne O'Connor.

> WM: I wish somebody from the "U" would have been here to answer that question. We offered somebody from the "U" the opportunity to come. They could not have somebody.
>
> CHS: I'd like to address the fact that they don't have anybody coming because that in itself is, I think, very, very wrong.
>
> WM: Apparently nobody was available.
>
> CHS: Oh, no one was available in an entire university with millions and millions of dollars invested in these various [women's] programs. There isn't a single person that can come up and face criticism or face lively debate. *They don't* [emphasis hers] want it debated, they don't want open discussion, they don't want any light to shine on what they're doing.

Now let me supply the facts. The *Wes Minter Show* "offered" the University's Public Relations Office "the opportunity" on Friday to find someone to appear on the Monday morning show. Despite this short notice, the Office phoned four faculty members (including myself) that afternoon, and, unable to reach them, left messages. As it turned out, they were all out of town or otherwise committed. Though eager to appear on the show, I was already scheduled to attend a dissertation defense involving a Canadian student and three faculty members now at other universities. Having missed that opportunity, I am grateful for this one to discuss Sommers' criticisms and shine a little light on what women's studies, and she, are doing.

Ellen Messer-Davidow is associate professor of English at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

> I would like to see Wellesley College, Mount Holyoke, Smith, Mills, and the University of Minnesota—among the more extreme examples—print the following announcement on the first page of their bulletins:
>
> We will help your daughter discover the extent to which she has been in complicity with the patriarchy. We will encourage her to reconstruct herself through dialogue with us. She may become enraged and chronically offended. She will very likely reject the religious and moral codes you raised her with. She may well distance herself from family and friends. She may change her appearance, and even her sexual orientation. She may end up hating you (her father) and pitying you (her mother). After she has completed her reeducation with us, you will certainly be out tens of thousands of dollars and very possibly be out one daughter as well.
>
> —Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism?*, p. 91.

The Politics of Feminist Epistemology: The Sommers Debate

Susan Stanford Friedman

TWO YEARS AGO, Christina Hoff Sommers published a preview of her book, *Who Stole Feminism?*, in a *New Republic* article lambasting academic feminism. Entitled "Sister Soldiers" (October 5, 1992), it relies upon the same kind of rhetorical manipulation, spurious reasoning, and inadequate or inaccurate handling of data that characterizes the book. It is important that defenders of academic feminism understand the politics not only of what Sommers says but also of the epistemological bases of her attack. The article, compact as it is, offers a convenient wordshop for examining the way in which *how* she argues calls into question *what* she argues.

In "Sister Soldiers," Sommers claims the voice of responsible journalist and objective historian. Billed as "Live from a Women's Studies Conference," the article narrates a partial "history" of the 1992 National Women's Studies Association convention in Austin, Texas by way of introducing a brief history of academic feminism in the United States. Sommers writes overtly from the perspective of what she calls "an older 'First Wave' kind of feminism whose main goal is equity."(30) Identifying herself as a feminist, she engages in a historiographic project whose covert agenda is to attack what she calls the newer "'Second Wave' gynocentric feminism, which since the early '70s has taken center stage in the universities."(33) Most academic feminists would recognize her article—in spite of its self-identified feminism—as consistent with the phenomenon of current attacks on women's studies coming from such media heroes as Charles Sykes and Dinesh D'Souza and organizations like the National Association of Scholars. Sommers uses historiographic discourse—first, about the NWSA convention, then, the development of women's studies—to condemn wholesale the project of contemporary academic feminism. Her stories of the past represent her attempt to intervene in the present—to halt the march of what she opposes within feminism.

Sommers' diachronic discourse is easily unveiled as synchronic discourse in drag. Her narratives of the NWSA convention and the development of women's studies collapse quickly into figural representations of a demonized feminism. She practices a kind of metonymic historiography in which the telling anecdote of feminist excess stands in for the multi-faceted phenomenon of academic feminism. Substituting a part for the whole, she characterizes all women's studies through narrative recitation of single incidents that determine guilt by association. This metonymic smear begins with the title, "Sister Soldiers," which foreshadows her attack in the article on "gynocentric feminism" by echoing the name of the Afrocentric rap singer Sister Soljah, from whom candidate Bill Clinton distanced himself during his presidential campaign. The implication of this covert allusion is that just as the liberal Clinton was right to separate himself from black ethnocentrism, she as liberal feminist is correct to distance herself from a gynocentric feminism that promotes "sisterhood." Whatever one thinks of Sister Soljah, Sommers' analogic figuration of academic feminism as Afrocentrism depends upon a hidden rhetoric of racist paranoia. Like many Americans of different political stripes, Sommers might well have been repulsed by the racism of the Willie Horton ad during the Bush-Dukakis presidential race in 1988; but in rhetorical terms, her title functions in a similar way.

Sommers establishes her authority as historian by amassing narrative detail about the conference for the first third of the article. She carefully sets the scene of the conference and narratives its opening events, detailing Eleanor Smeal's late arrival for the initial address and the panelists who filled in until she came: "To pass the time, we were introduced to an array of panelists....Still no Smeal. A panelist named Angela took the floor...A weary Eleanor Smeal finally arrived...."(30) This narrative detail functions to produce what Roland Barthes calls the "reality effect," that is, the effect of reality, of objective history achieved through the piling up of "facts." Detail establishes verisimilitude, which then lends credibility to her point of view, which seems to emerge objectively out of the data. She reports, for example, that "Louise and I were relived when the proceedings were interrupted by a coffee break. Half-and-half was available—though perhaps not for long. The eco-feminist caucus has been pushing to eliminate all meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products at NWSA events."(30) Sommers' manipulation of the reality effect in her narrative of the conference establishes her credibility for her accounts of feminist conferences and classrooms around the country. Metonymies of feminism appear throughout the rest of the article as characterizations of the norm: the women's studies program directors who joined hands in a "healing circle" and "assumed the posture of trees experiencing rootedness and tranquility"; the introductory women's studies course at Rutgers that requires student to perform "some 'outrageous' and 'liberating' act outside of class" and then share feelings about it in class; the "heady claim" by Elizabeth Minnich that "'What we are doing is comparable to Copernicus shattering our geo-centricity....We are shattering andro-centricity'"; and so forth.(31-32) "Ouchings and mass therapy," she asserts, "are more the norm than the exception in academic feminism."(30)

What epistemology best counters Sommers' account? Operating out of a positivist feminist epistemology, I could respond by saying that her history is "not true," that she is a "bad historian," and then I could offer counter stories that are more accurate and have greater objective truth value. I could demonstrate that she exhibits no skill in handling her data, in assessing and demonstrating with evidence just how characteristic her anecdotes are of academic feminism in all its complexity and multiple formations. I might ask, for example, why she left out the massively influential presence of feminist scholars in professional associations and their conferences—such as the Modern Language Association, American Historical Association, American Psychological Association, American Political Science Association, and so forth. Shouldn't she have examined feminist activities at conferences within the traditional disciplines as well as at NWSA? It is not difficult to show, especially in the humanities, that academic feminism has permeated and altered (if not transformed) many traditional disciplines. But for historically specific reasons having to do with the formation of academic feminism in the United States, the place to see such change in process is not primarily NWSA conferences, but rather discipline-based feminist conferences, journals, and research, much of which is influenced by interdisciplinary feminist theory and knowledge, but retains a methodological and substantive "home-base" in a pre-existing discipline.

From a subjectivist feminist standpoint, I might counter Sommers'

history by critiquing the bias that shapes her narrative at every point—her claim to greater objectivity than the "Second Wave"; her metonymic substitutions of the part for the whole; her stagist designation of "First Wave" and "Second Wave" feminism, where the second is represented as a degeneration and betrayal of the first; her invocation not only of racial paranoia in the title but also more generally of conspiracy theories rooted historically in anti-Semitic discourse ("These women run the largest growth area in the academy..."; "They are disproportionately represented..."; "They are quietly engaged in hundreds of well-funded projects...").(30) Indeed, the disdain she exhibits for academic feminism seems to operate on a binary of pure/impure in which she laments the contamination of reasonable feminism by the destructive distortions of irrational excess.

Both positivist and subjectivist critiques of Sommers have merit. From the beginning, women's studies has conceived contradictory currents of both positivist and subjectivist epistemologies. As a compensatory discourse, its research and teaching has countered hegemonic discourses about women that ignored, distorted, or trivialized women's history, experience, and potential by telling the "truth" about women. As a subjectivist discourse, women's studies has insisted on all knowledge (including women's studies) as value-based, emerging from a given perspective or standpoint. I believe that both epistemologies are necessary to the enterprise of women's studies as moderating influences on the potential excesses of each. To accomplish a thorough critique of Sommers' "Sister Soldiers" and *Who Stole Feminism?*, both epistemologies would be necessary, for Sommers' history of women's studies is both wildly inaccurate and anything but value-free.

How seriously should we take Sommers' claim to speak as a feminist on behalf of feminism? Rhetorically speaking, Sommers sets herself up as a (white) knight in shining armor determined to save the distressed damsel of true feminism from the (black) knights of gynocentric feminism. We could say that the more than $100,000 in grants from conservative antifeminist sources, as well as the ecstatic support she has recently received from such conservative media moguls as Rush Limbaugh, unveil her self-identification with feminism as a rhetorical ploy that obscures her own profound anti-feminism.

While Sommers may in fact be anti-feminist, I think that making this the epistemological ground of attack is short-sighted in political terms. I prefer to take her self-identification as a feminist at face value. What I most object to in her writing is her presumption to speak for feminism, her insistence that she possesses the pipeline to true feminism. This rests, I believe, on a fundamentalist epistemology, an exaggerated form of positivism which assumes that the speaker has privileged access to the Truth by which all other views can be measured. I find such fundamentalism dangerous—whatever its political and religious forms throughout the world. What Sommers refuses to see is the multiplicity of academic feminisms, the genuine multivocality of women's studies, the enormous diversity of viewpoints in feminist research, classrooms, and pedagogy. Determined to demonize what repels her, Sommers thinks in binarist terms of good and evil, seemingly unaware that all fields, including women's studies, have their strengths and weaknesses, their capacities for excellences and trivia.

Having attacked Sommers' fundamentalist epistemology, I do not want to set myself up to speak for "true" feminism and thus exclude her from the feminist umbrella. I regard the common denominator of feminism as the belief in women's oppression (however defined) and the advocacy of change (however defined). The vitality of feminism worldwide resides, I believe, in the dynamism of debate and disagreement about the nature of this oppression and what kind of change is necessary. In "Sister Soldiers," Sommers appears to express her own version of these two principles. And for this reason, I accept her position as one among many within feminism.

What I don't accept is her refusal to recognize the legitimacy, indeed the absolute necessity, of differences among feminisms. "Who Stole Feminism?" asks the title of her book, positing herself as the Vestal Virgin of the True Flame of feminism. In condemning the project of women's studies *in toto*, Sommers attempts to censor debate and diversity, the very things she claims the so-called gynocentric feminists do. As a defender of academic feminism, I do not approve of all women's studies research and pedagogy, any more than I could defend all the academic work that takes place under the rubric of literary studies, my other field. In fact, I would insist upon the necessity of constant problematization of the epistemological, ontological, and political bases of women's studies. Without such vigilance, women's studies would stagnate. The epistemology of self-critique and interrogation, however, is not Sommers' project. Her defense of what she calls First Wave feminism and "equity" women's studies rests upon a fundamentalist epistemology which grants her particular feminist politics the status of Truth and totalistically condemns all the rest of us to the trash heap of history. History—as both the past and the story of the past—has always had its winners and losers. And Sommers wants to win.

Susan Stanford Friedman teaches English and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. This essay is adapted from "Making History: Reflections on Feminism, Narrative, and Desire," in Feminism Beside Itself *(Routledge, forthcoming in 1995).*

Clarification

In the Spring 1994 issue of *Democratic Culture*, we included a quote from *Esquire*'s "Do-Me Feminism" article, where Christina Hoff Sommers was reported as saying: "There are a lot of homely women in women's studies. Preaching these antimale, antisex sermons is a way for them to compensate for various heartaches—they're just mad at the beautiful girls."

In response to an Anna Quindlen column mentioning the quote, Sommers denied saying it: "*Esquire* did not get it right, and I have sent them a letter to that effect. I do not think that academic feminists are less attractive than other women. I do find fault with feminist theorists who say that women who enjoy conventional feminine artifice are captive to a 'beauty myth.' Such prudish disapproval is unattractive and not a little misogynist."(*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1/28/94)

Tad Friend, the author of the *Esquire* article, contends that the quote is accurate.

Will the Real Feminist Please Stand Up?

Ann Ferguson

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS' *Who Stole Feminism?* is getting a lot of play in the popular media, even though the book is shallow and unscholarly. The reason for its success is not the merits of the book but the cultural backlash against feminism that Susan Faludi in *Backlash* and Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* persuasively argue is upon us. But even though Sommers' book is not persuasive in the general attack she makes upon academic feminism, she does raise the important issue of the gap between the theories and goals of many academic feminists and those of many non-academic women who are not sure the former's views really represent their interests. The problem is the gap between theory and practice—the fact that many academic feminists are not activists engaged in practical political projects such as demands for affordable childcare, women's reproductive rights, etc. Unfortunately Sommers herself, though she calls herself a feminist, is not an activist engaged outside the academy in any project for social change to improve the lives of women. And although Sommers weighs in on the side of what she calls "equity" feminism as opposed to those she calls "gender" feminists, her own position is not clearly presented and argued for. Furthermore, her claim that it represents the feminism of the "average" woman is extremely suspect, particularly given her own lack of connection to average women who have banded together in community projects.

There are major problems with the evidence Sommers provides to attack the majority of academic feminists. She lumps a number of us together under the category of gender feminists, claims that we all agree with a theory of male dominance that makes women defenseless victims of a patriarchal sex/gender system, and implies that her view, equity feminism, is the only plausible, realistic and defensible position. But is her categorization superior to the more standard distinctions between Liberal, Radical, Psychoanalytic, Socialist, Marxist, and Postmodernist feminist approaches? It is instructive that Sommers' main purpose in lumping us all together is to imply a plot against the common sense position of the majority of women, her equity feminism.

But Sommers never really defends that position on its own merits—or even the claim that it represents the view of the majority of American women—so her rationale for insisting that the reputed opposition between gender feminism and equity feminism should override all differences between "gender feminists" is weak.

Sommers' claim that "gender feminists" believe all women are victims is a caricature of feminist analysis that only applies to the most naive of radical feminist positions. On the contrary, many of us would indeed agree that women do have power in some of their traditional roles and that there is an ideology/reality gap between the dominant stereotype in our society of the ideal feminine as passive and submissive and the reality of women who regularly challenge that stereotype but who are invisible. If there were not such an ideology/reality gap, how could we even explain the possibility of an oppositional women's movement arising to challenge the roles and stereotypes?

Sommers ignores much of the sophisticated work going on in feminist theories of self and agency which reject the simplistic either/or of the individual as autonomous atom, freely choosing his or her values and options vs. the individual as passive victim of social conditioning and institutional constraints. For example, though I am lumped in the category of gender feminism by Sommers, in my books *Blood at the Root* (Pandora, 1989) and *Sexual Democracy* (Westview, 1991) I have developed an aspects theory of self which sees personalities as composed of many aspects defined in relation to other persons, activities and institutional roles and constraints. Although a person may be oppressed in one aspect of self, in another aspect he or she may be powerful, and it is the consciousness of such contrary aspects of self which may motivate a person to social activism designed to change some of the contradictory aspects of one's values and personality.

Without providing a convincing rationale for her own equity feminist position, what stands out is the shallow and distorted nature of her characterization of our commonalities. For example, Sommers quotes Iris Young as having categorized certain thinkers as "gynocentric"—valuing women's values over men's—and then incorrectly applies Young's category to all feminists she has labeled gender theorists, thus distorting Young's argument which distinguished between those who think biological differences inevitably generate value differences, and those social constructionists like herself and myself, who disagree with this view.

The basic difference between Sommers' self-styled equity feminism and those of us she labels gender feminists seems to be that all of us have an *institutional* or *structural* analysis of male dominance which she disagrees with from her individualist perspective. That is, we seek to understand how male dominance originates in human societies, how and why it persists, and through what institutionalized practices this occurs, whereas she seems confident that the institutional barriers to gender equality were removed by the First Wave feminist political campaigns which got women the vote, married women the right to property, child custody in the case of divorce, etc. Her view seems to be that male dominance is due more to a victimized state of mind than any institutionalized sexism, so we women should just get on with the job of assimilating ourselves into formerly male-dominated careers and stop doing social critiques of rape, sexual objectification, pornography, and domestic violence.

But what kind of *arguments* does she give for her position and against ours? Mostly, she cites mistaken media reports of inflated statistics about the prevalence of violence against women, and claims that these are characteristic of feminist research, marked by hyperbole and lack of objectivity. But using a few examples of mistakes or exaggerations to critique a whole school of research is like challenging the Germ theory of disease because some researchers who support that hypothesis made mistakes or exaggerated claims about germs being the basis of all diseases.

I would argue that examining male dominance as a structural problem rather than an individual problem is a hypothesis with greater explanatory power: all sorts of incidents which would have to be dismissed as inexplicable individual pathologies make more sense on the former theory.

Consider the disturbing case of O.J. Simpson, a paragon of male virtue, a charming, gracious football star who always stood by his teammates, and was universally liked. How on the individualist equity feminist framework can we explain his brutal murder of his wife? Answer: we can't—it is totally inexplicable since the vast majority of

the evidence about O.J.'s personality supports the view that he would not be capable of such an act. But on the structural or institutional analysis, we live in a system which socializes us into a patriarchal sex/gender system and which institutionally supports male power over women. This general hypothesis plus concrete facts about O.J.'s past behavior and attitudes, can explain why he could be capable of such a brutal murder. O.J. was a wife batterer who believed that his wife was his property and his sex object, and that his excessive love for her justified his right to control her will by violence, and to eliminate her if she refused to accede to his wishes. These beliefs are an extension of some aspects of the masculine ideal of men as sex subjects, as owners of women. Such beliefs are not only taught to men and women by their families of origin, by media advertising and movies, by clothing fashions, but they are also supported institutionally by police who don't take domestic violence as a serious crime, and a criminal justice system which doesn't require batterers to go through any punishment or process of rehabilitation.

In another line of attack, Sommers critiques us "gender feminists" because we want what she characterizes as "utopian social transformation." Well, so did anti-slavery advocates, those defending the rights of labor to organize against large corporations and their hired gunmen, and those who first advocated a welfare state against the social Darwinists who argued that the poor starving were just a natural law of the elimination of the unfit. One person's utopia is another person's reasonable demand for social justice, and only the test of history can finally tell which demands were utopian and which practical. But how would Sommers suggest we challenge sexist attitudes, unfair sexual divisions of labor and systematic violence against women? Is her idea that each isolated woman can challenge such unfair situations on an ad hoc basis any less "utopian"—in the sense of being an unworkable strategy? In my opinion, her own strategy of individualism is itself utopian.

Sommers critiques what she terms my "gender feminist utopia" in my book *Sexual Democracy*. She picks a passage in which I argue that if sex roles are eliminated we could transcend gender since it would no longer matter what biological sex individuals had. Love relationships could be based on relations between androgynous humans. Sommers argues that such a vision is based on an ideal of a "gender-neutral character" like Pat on *Saturday Night Live*, an ideal that not only is, to quote her, "a boring feminist fairy tale with no roots in psychological or social reality"(265) but also one that contemporary "lipstick lesbians" are rebelling against.

I should point out that Sommers' characterization of my position is shallow and unfair in that it takes a paper written in 1977 as my final word on a feminist vision, ignoring the recently written addendum which immediately follows it in the book where I present a more sophisticated position less easy to caricature. In that addendum I agree that gender differences would be likely to continue to be salient in sexual preferences and desires. I point out that my hope would be that so-called "masculine" and "feminine" traits would no longer be assumed to exclude each other and that many so-called feminine traits would be revalued to the point where men could find them desirable as traits to acquire. From this it does not follow that individuals would not still contain such traits in different mixes, or that we would all be required by the feminist thought police to desire the same thing.

Sommers' "lipstick lesbians" is not a relevant critique of an androgynous ideal of human personality. On what I prefer to call the "gynandrous" vision, a butch lesbian and a femme lesbian could both be seen to be androgynous or gynandrous: the crucial difference would be that the old gender dualist aesthetic of the autonomous, authoritarian role vs. the passive, dependent, incorporative, submissive role is no longer valued. Indeed, lipstick lesbians who are feminist reject the "being overwhelmed by Rhett Butler" fantasy that Sommers presents to us as somehow the "psychological or social reality" of the average woman's desires. Rather, they are claiming that there is power to be had in a feminist reinterpretation of the traditional "femme" role, seeing it as the role of seductive, sexy actor.

Since we have a critique of the contemporary patriarchal sex/gender system, Sommers charges Sandra Bartky, Marilyn Friedman and myself with "having an agenda of managing women's desires and fantasies." But why is a critique of the inegalitarian content of the sexual desires we find ourselves with any different in moral status than a critique of the racist beliefs we find ourselves with? From the fact that we are critical of our and other women's existing desires, it doesn't follow that we are being authoritarian. Yes, we seek to persuade women as well as men to think more about their desires and to question whether they fit in with their beliefs that women and men should be given equal respect, but from this it doesn't follow that we are trying to impose the "politically correct" desires onto them, any more than it follows that Sommers herself is trying to "impose" her Rhett Butler fantasies on feminists as somehow "more exciting" and psychologically real. In charging us with authoritarianism and a PC attitude, Sommers is masking her own conservative values and partisan position, which amounts to a PC attitude by those who want to preserve the status quo.

In another line of attack, Sommers implies that the feminist pedagogy that I and others she labels "transformationist" teachers are abusing our power by imposing our own utopian agendas and attitudes on students rather than using a traditional pedagogy which she says has as a "primary objective...teaching students a subject matter that will be useful to them."(92) But as a philosopher, I would maintain that much of the traditional teaching of Western philosophy certainly did not teach a subject matter that was "useful" to the students in any value-free way. That is, it either taught them that philosophizing was above their heads and only the few wise could grasp it, or it taught them to be critical of received opinions, which is exactly what us so-called "gender feminist" philosophers have been doing.

She claims without giving any evidence for this claim that "most students are not 'buying into' gender feminism" and resent this shift away from her characterization of traditional pedagogy.(92) First of all, Sommers is just mistaken that most students resent having teachers committed to social transformation. It has been my experience that most students prefer teachers who are open about their values rather than smuggling them into the syllabus with the pretense of being objective and value neutral. Since in my view no courses which deal with the humanities and social sciences can be value free, it is less authoritarian to the students to be open about one's values than to hide

> "Sommers reveals the same sloppiness that she criticizes in other feminists. She plays fast and loose with anonymous sources and uses ellipses in mid-quote....Tellingly, she thinks N.O.W. stands for National Organization of Women when it is actually 'for' women and open to male members."
>
> —Barbara Ehrenreich in *Time*, 8/1/94.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

them under the mantle of objective, value-free investigations.

In my experience, what students resent is a context in which they are not allowed to disagree with the professor or to get a respectful hearing of their own opinions. I make every effort to give readings and present the arguments of those who disagree with my views so that those students may find their opinions represented. However, it is true that a professor wields a lot of power and those who present strong opinions will be resented by some no matter what pedagogical techniques are used to provide a space for open debate. Furthermore, because the women students have been socialized to defer to men, what will empower many of the women to begin to speak of their experiences and opinions is often a safe space where everyone can speak. Thus, the pedagogical goals conflict, of empowering the shy students (mostly women) to express and develop their views and values, on the one hand, and encouraging debates in which only the force of the stronger argument prevails, to improve students' philosophical reasoning power, on the other.

I am surprised that Professor Sommers does not acknowledge the difficulty of balancing these two incommensurate pedagogical values, given that she lays such stress on democracy as one of her cardinal values, and faults academic feminists for setting ourselves up as experts to impose our views on others. But in a technocratic and patriarchal society where experts, and men, are assumed to have more authority to speak, if one wants to encourage the development of participatory democracy, one has to find the way to create both equality of opportunity for all to develop their voices as well as the critical skills in the majority to follow the most cogent line of argument. As a philosopher, Sommers surely has considered the problem of the tyranny of the majority as one of the problems with a populace which does not value the civil rights of the minority (the problem of equality) and which is not educated or taught critical skills to examine its own opinions.

Although I disagree with Sommers in her critiques of contemporary feminism, I welcome her book since it is an opportunity for further debate on important issues facing feminists today. Sommers brings up several issues that women's movements must spend more time analyzing than we have done. I call them the Democracy Problem, the PC Problem, and the Town/Gown Problem.

The Democracy Problem concerns how feminist theorists and activists balance respect for the opinion of the majority of women who may not define themselves as feminist with our own analyses which are critical of these opinions. The PC Problem is how feminists adjudicate disagreements in strongly held beliefs among ourselves about male dominance and how it should be eliminated, e.g. lesbian-separatism, the pornography and S/M debate, and the connections of racial and class justice with feminist demands. The Town/Gown question is how academic feminists can have the authority to influence non-academic women if they are not engaged in some grassroots practice which validates their leadership and the effectiveness of their theories in relation to the experiences of ordinary women.

Christina Hoff Sommers' critique of her opponents in academia does raise all these questions, for which she should get credit, although her discussion is much too superficial to really answer any of them.

Ann Ferguson teaches philosophy and women's studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

The "Stolen Feminism" Hoax

Laura Flanders

IN HER ACCOUNT of a campaign sparked by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) to get *NBC* to play a 30-second public service announcement about domestic violence before the broadcast of the 1993 Super Bowl game, Sommers repeats uncritically one reporter's version of the incident, and adds fresh errors of her own.

Sommers writes that there wasn't "any basis for saying that there was a significant rise in domestic violence on Super Bowl Sunday." Her book suggests that she never read FAIR's Jan. 18, 1993 news release, which spelled out the grounds for addressing domestic violence on Super Bowl Sunday. That release stated: "The Super Bowl is one of the most widely viewed television events every year. Unfortunately, women's shelters report that Super Bowl Sunday is also one of the worst days of the year for violence against women in the home." The release cited press reports (*New York Times*, 1/5/92, 1/22/92; *Chicago Tribune*, 1/27/91) based on the accounts of those who work with battered women.

In contrast to a "roiling sea of media credulity"—including at least one journalist who had been writing about Super Bowl-related violence for years before FAIR's campaign—Sommers praises "a lone island of professional integrity": Ken Ringle, a *Washington Post* staff writer. Ringle is hardly to be held up as an ethical model: The *American Journalism Review* (5/93) found that, in his Super Bowl article (1/31/93), he appeared "to have twisted and used quotes selectively to support his thesis," and noted that the *Post*'s ombudsman had acknowledged "inaccuracies and flaws" in his reporting. Sommers cites the *AJR* article in a footnote, but declines to quote it.

Sommers claims to be a skeptic who believes in going to the original source, but neither she nor Ringle ever called the national FAIR office in New York to check their stories or get copies of the materials that FAIR distributed. Nor did Sommers consult a calendar: Her "chronology" put the Super Bowl on Jan. 30, which was actually a Saturday.

Sommers also claims that around the Super Bowl, "a very large mailing was sent by Dobisky Associates, FAIR's publicists, warning at-risk women: 'Don't remain at home with him during the game.'" Had Sommers (or Ringle) called FAIR, s/he would have discovered that FAIR has never worked with Dobisky Associates—and had never heard of the firm before Ringle's piece.

In her account, Sommers uses quotes from a psychotherapist named Michael Lindsey that appeared in Ringle's piece. One of his comments she quotes twice, for emphasis. She doesn't mention that the *Post*'s ombudsman had acknowledged that Lindsey's remarks had been taken out of context by Ringle.

Nor does Sommers mention that the views attributed to Lindsey by Ringle—critical of FAIR's Super Bowl efforts and of a link between football and domestic violence—were directly contradicted by quotes from Lindsey in the same day's *New York Times* (1/31/93): "That PSA will save lives," said Lindsey. "It will give people the permission to call for help. The same way so much violence in football gives people permission to batter."

Laura Flanders is Women's Desk Coordinator at FAIR and host of the Counterspin radio program. This article is excerpted from the cover story of FAIR's magazine EXTRA! *(September/October 1994). Subscriptions are $30 (P.O. Box 911, Dept. V4JE, Pearl River NY 10965).*

Composing Feminism

Elizabeth Fay

GENDER POLITICS IS a funny thing, eliciting anything from heated debates over how to escape historical determinism in order to create equality, to passionate defenses of the nostalgic status quo. Those in the second camp view that fantastic past as an era of apolitical, unquestioned privilege which men accorded women as a matter of chivalry and manners. Such defenders of a mythos of protection understand the world in terms of their privileged sphere: The underprivileged have their own place in the order of things; the struggling ranks were born to struggle. And if a little quiet rape occurs on college campuses, a little harassment in the workplace, what does this have to do with propriety, pearls, and the perks of the job? In wondering "how women have betrayed women," Sommers has placed herself squarely in this second camp, and in doing so she is herself a principle betrayer of women.

Sommers prides herself on reading the current state of feminism as Camille Paglia does: as a monolithic structure that is ruled by powerful strategists. "Women" and "feminism," here, have a curiously stable value for Sommers. Not surprisingly, in this formation feminism is conspiratorial; it "steals" and it does so by deluding its adherents in the younger generation, or so Paglia and Sommers and other reactionary hystericists believe. Besides a reductionist and wrongful monolithic reading of feminism—which has long been held by many thinkers to be a philosophical as well as political movement of many feminisms—both Paglia and Sommers essentialize feminism as either a knee-jerk reaction to patriarchal authority (gender feminism), or a desire to have all the privilege of well-established men (equity feminism). They fear that the former is a reaction that will be detrimental to their own conservative agenda, which is (although perhaps neither Paglia nor Sommers would explicitly state this) to do well within patriarchy and by the rules of patriarchy. As good-girl spokeswomen for the right wing, Paglia and Sommers and others (Mona Charen, for instance) see themselves as both ideologically speaking from within a rightful and empowering conservatism, and as empowered and privileged therein.

Certainly the grant support and applause Sommers has received reveals just such a superior reception and treatment, but it is only a "reception"—a welcoming in of a stranger as the token. Sommers and Paglia both see their privileged treatment as their right, without worrying whether similar treatment could be bought at the same high price that they themselves have agreed to. It serves the interest of both these women to believe instead that it is a monolithic feminism which is selling younger women down the river because such a belief hides their own personal gains and throws the onus on women and men who, in a variety of political schools of thought, urge women to think for themselves.

It particularly suits these two academics who believe themselves to be producing intellectual and even scholarly deconstructions of the feminist movement to conflate academic feminism with political feminism. Furthermore, it suits them to disregard the large differences within academic feminist thought, some of which is strongly based on American philosophical traditions, and some of which is strongly based on American philosophical traditions, and some of which is strongly poststructualist, postmodern, and radically positioned. Oddly enough, the terms I have used to describe more heterogeneously based feminist academics—poststructuralist, postmodern, and radically positioned—are the very ones that Camille Paglia uses to describe herself: a radical, bisexual libertarian. Yet no intellectual could be further from a radically oriented position than Paglia, the woman who serves as Sommers' hero.

In construing themselves as somehow outside academic privilege and therefore better able to critique the "privileged" status of feminist academics, both Paglia and Sommers construct a different authority for themselves that has also bought them immensely increased prestige, money, and fame. Yet, while Paglia teaches at a relatively marginalized institution, and has long had a marginalized career, Sommers holds a stable position at an elite school.

It is somewhat disingenuous, then, for Sommers to attack writing instructors, a class of professionals that labors at the bottom rung of academia for the least pay and status in a role overwhelmingly dominated by women, for rebuke due to the crime of following the heed of feminist propagandists. This is the charge Sommers has levied against me in two pages of scolding (102-103) in *Who Stole Feminism?* for my response to a minority student. I was, of course, curious to see what the well-paid and fully conservative-funded Sommers would have to say about me in a book where my presence would indicate that I was against feminism or on the wrong side of it. All of my publications are feminist, issuing out from my own heterogeneously constructed feminism which does not rigidly follow any one school of thought but instead questions and rethinks each model and grounding principle. However, after reading those two pages I am not sure "study" is an accurate description of Sommers' efforts.

In my article, I was meditating on the hermeneutics of student anger in the classroom, and wondering about different interpretive strategies for that rage in order to get at pedagogies that only inflate it. Sommers misreads (does not read) my argument, and assumes I am trying to defend a pedagogy that refuses to teach students models and rules for correct writing. Where I posit an archeological site, Sommers finds a rhetorical defense.

Next, Sommers misidentifies me as a low-rung instructor so that she can expound on how I have bought into what my writing professors taught me without stopping to think through the consequences, "that it is she who has been taught by her feminist mentors

"You'll notice in their [feminist] writings that they're never very far from evoking the Holocaust, or witch trials."
—Christina Hoff Sommers, quoted in the *Boston Globe*, 6/16/94.

"Why has feminism become the equivalent to witch trials?"
—Christina Hoff Sommers, on *Crossfire*, 6/4/94.

"One factual error turned up as I checked facts for this review. Sommers makes the dramatic point that the University of Minnesota has a rape crisis hotline where New York City does not; in fact, New York City does have a rape hotline—and has for 20 years. That's a sloppy mistake; a book that takes out after others for playing fast and loose with the facts ought to be pristine."—Delia O'Hara, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 6/26/94.

to adopt a patronizing posture toward women like [this student]."(102) But my article was an effort to come to grips with the gender and class rage of my women students, and far from justifying my pedagogy, I wanted to discover what was not helpful in it for these students.

Finally, Sommers ignores my argument and conclusions, and only focuses on one of the students I describe to argue that I unquestioningly follow the misguided liberalism of my feminist composition professors. Sommers uses the body of my text to contemplate the state of undergraduate education in this supposedly feminist-influenced, and therefore dangerously misguided nation. To do so, Sommers implies that I should be teaching all my students exactly what the one student she picks out wants: a classical approach to teaching the modes, and a straightforward model applicable to all writing needs. I have no problem with the first of these desires, except that my course was the wrong one in which to satisfy it; however, if the second exists I would surely like to know.

The course I was analyzing, English 102, is a second-semester writing course meant to follow a more fundamental skills course, EN101. In EN102 I am supposed to build on the work of the prior semester by teaching argumentation, library research skills, and revision strategies—in short, how "to get on with business" as a student, a line Sommers quotes from me without understanding what I meant. Indeed, it is because of this mandate of this course, which seems all too practical to me, that I was surprised by this student's anger at the "impracticability" of the course. Sommers ignores the obvious problem—that models are not useful if argumentative skills are not practiced and refined, and that all the models in the world can't help a student consult library materials—and focuses on the easy assessment: without models, no student will ever function in our society. Sommers assumes that simply by reading my *Radical Teacher* article she can know this particular student's needs and inner beliefs: "But [she] hadn't signed up for voices, visions, and gender politics; she had signed up for a course in English composition. She wanted her essays corrected because she wanted to learn to write better English."(101) If this is true, then why is it that despite endless responses and revision suggestions and grammatical corrections from me, this student still complained, and based her complaint specifically on a lack of models? Sommers confuses "better English" with easy formulas and "correction."

Sommers' agenda here is to relegate students to a model method that does not encourage—nor at times even allow for—individual thought and revisionist strategies. In this, she clearly aligns herself with E.D. Hirsch, Dinesh D'Souza, and others who assert that Victorian approaches to inculcating the lower classes into the (upper) middle-class value system are a tidy way to dispel dissent and to disenfranchise the marginalized by making them supporters of the elite. Rather than colonize minorities, we can simply promise them the American dream, and make it sound so palpable, so formulaic, so easy to work out, that they sell themselves down the river without a second (revisionist) thought. In light of this, is it not odd to find that Sommers would teach at an elitist institution such as Clark, and I would teach at a public institution with a strong community mandate and a diverse student population?

If a Hirschian ideology is at work in the pages Sommers contributes to my defamation as a feminist sell-out, the overall tone of her book is a straightforward defense of Camille Paglia's political (not academic, and certainly not scholarly) platform. Paglia requires that higher education devote itself to urging young, already privileged, women to assert/reassert their privilege within a masculinist culture. That this assertion comes at the price of—as does all privilege, male or female—disenfranchised others is not a difficulty here, for in true Reagan style, Paglia merely recommends that anyone who wants to can have a share of the pie. Paglia takes Katherine Hepburn as her model of a strong "get on with it" type of feminist; it is a specific aspect of Paglia's philosophy to celebrate the fact that Hepburn's independence is self-oriented, and not concerned with women's status and privilege in general. Paglia is of the opinion that feminism simply means to turn the power hierarchy upside down while making sure the apples don't topple off the cart, and the underneath stays underneath. This is a version of the very militancy that Paglia accuses feminism in general of: the inversion of sexual politics so that women come out on top this time. Painting feminism *en masse* in this monolithic and conspiratorial way allows Paglia, and Sommers after her, to jump on the privileged and elitist bandwagon, and in doing so to seem to be advocating women's rights. But in using rhetoric that defuses any independent thinking on the part of either female or male readers, the incendiary Paglia—and Sommers after her (again)—seduces her readers into following the formulaic, nonrevisable, anaesthetizing model she offers them—but not herself—as a template for success.

Elizabeth Fay teaches English at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Desperately Seeking Political Correctness

The following ad recently appeared under the headline "DO YOU HAVE A PC HORROR STORY?" in the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee's conservative paper, the *UWM Times*:

> If you have been the victim of reverse discrimination by the UW system, endured brainwashing under the guise of sensitivity training, or have been given political indoctrination when you paid for an education, the Wisconsin Association of Scholars would like to talk to you. We are collecting material for a study of the effects of political correctness on the University of Wisconsin system and are in a position to bring abuses to the attention of administrators and the general public. If you are willing to share your experience with us, leave a message with our answering service.

TDC wants to counter the conservatives' one-sided accounts by beginning a national project to monitor violations of academic freedom and intolerance on college campuses. If you have information about tenure denials, censorship, intolerance, or similar events on campus—whether it's "political correctness" or "conservative correctness"—please let TDC know. We want to hear your anti-PC horror stories. Send your observations and newspaper clippings to John K. Wilson at TDC so that we can stay informed. TDC plans to prepare an annual report on academic freedom that goes beyond the biases and distortions about higher education presented in the media.

Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405 Evanston, IL 60204

Misrepresenting the Feminist Classroom

Dale Bauer

IT'S HARD TO remember at a time like this, upon the publication of *Who Stole Feminism?*, something that Deirdre English wrote in an important essay in the early 1980s, "The Fear That Feminism Will Free Men First." English cautioned feminists about remembering that other women rarely prove to be the real enemy to women's equality (see *Powers of Desire*, 478). But even as Christina Hoff Sommers' subtitle is "How Women Have Betrayed Women," it's also hard not to read that subtitle as an ironic reminder of how Sommers is unwittingly doing patriarchy's dirty work by her misrepresentation of Women's Studies programs and feminist teachers.

Sommers claims to be a feminist imploring other feminists for objectivity, but there is no sense in her book that she is addressing feminists at all. In fact, her audience for the book—her publicity appearances, her call-in talk show discussions—is really for like-minded thinkers, those who already need little persuasion that feminism has taken over the academy and everything and everyone else. Her work has so much become the bread-and-circus of the talk-show circuit that it is enough for her to deliver spectacle without substance, a spectacle which includes long lists of what she considers excesses of academic feminism without any context for these examples. Presenting herself as the last feminist, indeed the last woman, with any integrity in America, she describes herself as the "whistleblower" on Women's Studies.(*CSPAN*, July 7, 1994)

Who would be an acceptable feminist in Sommers' view? Someone like herself who could deal philosophically—her key word is "reasonable"(53)—with abstract issues like virtue, or a social scientist who could deliver the "facts" about gender. Anyone else seems to be betraying her notion of what feminism once was or should be. Her main locus of attack is against "advocacy" of any sort, since she imagines that advocacy pedagogy or politics is the method by which Women's Studies professors contaminate the paradise of value-neutral space: the college classroom.

The debate over "advocacy" centers on the question of whether the classroom is value-neutral or value-positive. Sommers devotes an entire chapter to "the feminist classroom" in the hope of deciding this debate. I have argued, in an essay on student evaluation of teachers that Sommers assails, students always bring their own assumptions and values to class and assume that their teachers do the same. The classroom, as they see it, is always a place where values—of the students and teachers' own making—circulate. And that circulation, *contra* Sommers, is never *one*-sided, but multi-sided. Pat Bizzell locates the controversy in "the idea that seemingly objective decisions on what to teach and how to teach it are deeply informed by the teacher's values, which, in turn, the teacher has learned from his or her own education in cultural values, education both in and out of school that includes cultural attitudes about gender, race and social class."(*Changing Classroom Practices*, 194) Bizzell, among many others, has come to see the classroom as inevitably charged with values, while others—like Sommers—want to maintain that the classroom can remain objective and value-free.

The attack on my 1990 *College English* essay, "The Other 'F' Word," began in November 1990 when NEH chair Lynne Cheney denounced it as an indication of the failure to maintain standards of truth, beauty, and excellence in the academy. Far from being a polemic piece advocating feminism, I tried to show that students in the late 1980s had already brought to class a whole repertoire of negative assumptions about feminism and imagined (1) that all classrooms were neutral spaces, and (2) feminist teachers (among others) destroyed objectivity, while other classrooms remain scrupulously neutral. My point was to show that students brought these expectations to classes before they even knew that a professor was a feminist or whether the class had a feminist content or method. Their expectations need to be addressed seriously.

Whether Lynne Cheney read my essay is not the point, since she did not deal with the argument. Martin Anderson cites the same essay in *Impostors in the Temple*, where I also appear as one of the impostors, but he doesn't cite the essay, only the charges Cheney made against it. It's quite clear that he did not actually read the essay, but relied on Cheney's authority for his attack. So I read Sommers expecting the same circular connection; I found that she did read the essay, though I can't say she understood it. Even more surprising was the misreading Sommers makes about my purpose: she claims that I am out to use "counterindoctrination" as a way of employing the feminist classroom. This may be what she wants to read, but in fact, I have written about dialogics, a process that relies on dialogue and engagement rather than the exercise of ideological control that Sommers assigns to me as a motive.

This misstatement of feminist motives is the staple of Sommers' work. I worry, too, as Sommers does, about the effects of students being punished for not agreeing with the teacher's view, but certainly no one would say that this aggression happens only or primarily in feminist classrooms. Students have always complained—rightly and wrongly—that teachers indoctrinate and bully and try to overpower. Contrary to what Sommers suggests, feminists have not invented intimidation tactics. If some find feminism intimidating, it may only be its difference from the usual ego-crushing that the pedagogy of "reasonableness" can so brutally practice.

Sommers' work can be read as her attempt to win a broader audience—which she is—by appealing to sensational strategies that are hardly part of the academic tradition she claims to support. Her rhetoric escalates in order to capture the attention that so many professors—whether from the right, left, or center—feel is denied them.

By couching her objections in the rhetoric of corporate industry—the whistleblower—she takes the only stand left to her: constructing feminism as a monolith and herself as a paragon of rational oppositionality. Despite her claim in the last sentence of the book that *her* kind of feminism will return since it is "as American as apple pie,"(275) we can only read this as a defensive move, one that preserves her self-interest in a world where the values of *all* professors, including philosophers of any stripe, are in grave doubt. She mistakes the enemy—blaming feminism for the so-called anti-intellectualism of the country; this move only indicates the bankruptcy of her nostalgic wish-dream that the conflicts will just all disappear and we will all be in "relaxed agreement."(275) But this agreement is only reached by dismissing her antagonists at the cost of real debate and conversation over democratic values.

Dale Bauer teaches English and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

The Need for Intelligent Critiques of Feminism

Russell Eisenman

WE NEED INTELLIGENT critiques of feminism, just as we need intelligent criticism of any ideas. This is especially true now, because feminism has changed in recent years, toward a movement which often seems anti-male and against a free exchange of ideas, if the ideas include criticism of feminist beliefs. Feminism is dogma in the mind of many supporters, to be supported in a knee-jerk fashion. Any criticism of the movement is put down, along with whoever dares to criticize feminism. Critics are often seen as conservative, anti-female fools. Also, anyone who writes against the movement or speaks out against it is in danger of not being able to get a job at institutions where feminists have some degree of control or influence.

In this context, Christina Hoff Sommers' book *Who Stole Feminism?* is an extremely important antidote to feminist dogma. Among other important things, Sommers points out that much feminism today is gender feminism, of an anti-male nature, as opposed to earlier feminists who were equity feminists, seeking equality but not seeking to put down or demonize men. Also, she points out that in seeking their gender feminist views, misleading statistics are frequently used. Thus, according to Sommers, it is not the case, as some feminists teach, that one out of four women on college campuses will be raped, that women earn only 59 cents for every dollar earned by men, etc. And she points out that women's studies classes are often purveyors of sloppy scholarship, but with great hostility to anyone, usually a male, in the class who dares to speak up and criticize what is being presented.

If I were looking for a job at another university, I probably would not write this article, because I might be excluded from employment at many places for giving a critique of feminism. This tells you something about how rigid and dogmatic the movement has become. Also, university feminists often make sure that students do not get to hear criticism of the movement. At Connecticut College, a book by feminist critic Camille Paglia (who describes herself as an anti-feminist feminist) was removed from the reading list. Another example, supporting Sommers' view of poor scholarship, occurred at the University of Maryland. Female students made posters of "potential rapists" and randomly included names of male students. Having worked with rapists in a prison, I can report that rapists are not your typical male. The idea that all men are potential rapists is invalid, but is propagated by some feminists, giving a distorted view of both men and rape. Like Stalinists or the Catholic Church, many modern day feminists seem determined to allow only orthodox views.

Some feminists, such as a feminist group in Seattle, Washington, would agree with critiques of today's feminist movement. The Seattle group says that feminists should be against sexism not sex. Further, men are not the enemy. But, current day feminists seem to disagree with such a liberal viewpoint, based on what they write and say. Thus, ironically, while the left tends to support contemporary feminism, modern-day feminism is often reactionary, going against the earlier feminist emphasis on freedom.

Nevertheless, intelligent critiques have appeared. I distinguish intelligent critiques from those based on opposition to feminism due to fear of changing sex roles. It is easy to dismiss those who fear feminism due to fear of women being anything but homemakers and subservient to men. Such reaction against the feminist movement is easy to reject as due to people fearful of change. But other critiques are intelligent, often liberal, at least in part, but very much opposed to the dogma of many feminists. I refer to such important books as Sommers' *Who Stole Feminism?*; Katie Roiphe's *The Morning After*, which shows how feminists have become anti-sex, anti-male, and desirous of regulation; Naomi Wolf's *Fire With Fire*, which distinguishes between "victim feminists" who alienate women by constantly emphasizing how bad things are for women and how bad men are vs. "power feminism" that promotes positive action; Warren Farrell's *The Myth of Male Power*, which demonstrates distortions of thinking in our culture that have been generally accepted and provides numerous critiques of feminism; and Camille Paglia's *Sex, Art, and American Culture*, which points out that feminists seem to have betrayed the earlier emphasis on freedom and now have become puritanical in many ways. Thus, Sommers' book is part of a backlash, but an intelligent backlash that seeks to critique feminism in important ways.

I have noticed that many feminists reject any criticism, and say that these books are unworthy. This knee-jerk rejection of even intelligent criticism supports my view of feminism as dogma on the part of many feminists. I have to keep saying things such as "many feminists" because not all feminists are the same. But, the ones who have captured the headlines and are influencing organizations and courts seem to fit my view of dogmatic people: opposed to the First Amendment, highly critical of men in general, to the extent of seeming to be anti-male. Thus, the movement seems puritanical and repressive, which is a great contrast to the feminism that I knew in the 1970s, when feminists seemed to celebrate sexual freedom and were in favor of openness, not censorship.

From the above-mentioned books, it appears that the way to be able to get criticism of the feminist movement published is to write a book, although there have been some suggestions that getting a book published which critiques the movements is very difficult. Perhaps that is changing. I do know, from my own experiences, how difficult it is to get criticism of feminism in print. First, I almost did not get a two-page critique of feminism published in *Psychological Reports*. The reviewers were extremely hostile and said that they disagreed with me. Only the intervention of the editor succeeded in getting the article printed (Vol. 74, 1994, pp. 201-202). Second, I tried to place the following classified ad in *The Humanist* magazine: "FEMINISM EXPOSED. 3 reports critique feminism as anti-First Amendment, anti-male, and pro-censorship. Send $5 to: Dr. Russell Eisenman, Department of Psychology, McNeese State University, Lake Charles, LA 70609-1895." Since they often have classified ads offering all kinds of self-published books or articles, my ad hardly seemed unusual. But, I got a rejection of my ad, on the alleged grounds that it would not appeal to readers of the magazine. So, I could not even pay to advertise three reports critiquing feminism. There has been at least one pro-feminist ad in their classified section. What is happening here?

"When Feminists Devour Their Own"

"Her book may turn out to be the equivalent of the battle of Gettysburg, with bodies littering the landscape in blue, gray and several shades of pink. This book may mark the high tide of feminism as surely as Cemetery Ridge marked the high tide of the Confederacy."

—Suzanne Fields, *Washington Times*, 7/18/94.

In conclusion, Sommers' book is part of a recent phenomenon: intelligent books critiquing feminism. It may still be difficult to get something published if it criticizes feminism. But perhaps there is now more room and less censorship for critiques of feminism. This is not due to open-mindedness on the part of feminists, but seems to reflect the fact that more and more people are seeing flaws in the feminist movement and are willing to commit their ideas to writing. The current critiques are not always conservative or from people who fear change. Rather, many of them point to what seem like major flaws in feminism that need to be addressed if the movement is to obtain support from both men and women (most women in the United States do not consider themselves feminists, as revealed by polls) for legitimate goals, such as equal opportunities for women and decent treatment of women. The legitimate goals are obscured by both the dogmatic way that feminists present their ideas and the specific content of some of the ideas, which often seem anti-male and puritanical.

Russell Eisenman teaches psychology at McNeese State University.

Chutzpah Isn't Enough: Some Thoughts on Reading *Who Stole Feminism?*

Patricia Farrant

THE FUROR, HOWEVER transitory, accompanying the publication of Christina Hoff Sommers' book, *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women*, is a cause for applause, not just rancor, among feminists. While it may not measure up to the standards for carefully researched scholarly work, the book is the outcome of a well-funded project, it has been heavily promoted, its message certainly sells, and it offers an almost irresistible invitation to response. After all, since feminism claims to be inclusive, we must acknowledge and include in the feminist family Sommers as well as those of us whose nerves she grates with her cannily crafted attempt at a hatchet job on the "half" of feminism she considers not "hers."

Sommers has tried to hold up a mirror to the segment of feminism she reviles—the "gender feminists"; in reality, the most important function of her book may be that it serves as a lamp, shedding light on some of the broader issues savvy feminists must attend to—right now.

What are some of these issues?

•*Taking charge of key words*

The first issue jumps right out of Sommers' title. Feminists must avoid the trap into which so many liberals have fallen—failing to prevent others from expropriating and then trivializing important concepts and definitions and from establishing the terms within which debate is carried out.

To ask "who stole feminism" is to slyly suggest that feminism is an already-defined entity, an intellectual "pink panther" that can be spirited away by thieves in the night. A more compelling concern for feminists should be to continue the effort to define what we *mean* by feminism(s). Above all, we must resist the impulse to talk about feminism in terms of the dichotomy that Sommers posits—gender feminists versus equity feminists. In this regard, Sommers' book is an extended exercise in synecdoche, in which she implies that those feminists whose politics and principles she deplores accurately characterize all of us who do not fall within the purview of so-called equity feminism.

Feminism as a concept deserves a better fate than political correctness, a term that has been purloined and subverted. PC—once a label liberals employed in ironic self-description—is now used cynically to trivialize commitment to such important matters as equity, equality, inclusiveness, equal opportunity, and human rights.

Feminists also have to resist the urge to succumb as Sommers does to *argumentum ad feminam*; to do so would be to engage in the discussion on terms established by others. And it is important to consider feminist thinkers Sommers neither attacks nor praises, but simply ignores—wide-ranging theorists who are hard to pigeonhole, Helen Haste, Judith Lorber, Sandra Bem, to name just a few.

Sommers is relentless in her ridicule of the pain (as well as the occasional downright silliness) that has occasionally accompanied the efforts of feminist groups like the National Women's Studies Association as they struggle to transform the bases of their group relations. Having been a participant in and observer of such transformations, I am convinced that we simply must not permit the struggles that accompany consciencization, perspective transformation, or even the pedagogical process of achieving anthropological perspective to be defined and trivialized by "outsiders."

•*Exploiting modern channels of communication*

Feminists need to display a clearer understanding of the media through which most people get their information and to learn how to use those media skillfully. Most Americans are accustomed to getting what they consider to be facts through television and through similar sources of bite-size knowledge. But as Neil Postman has observed in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, television increasingly is a medium through which discourse takes the form of entertainment. It has little tolerance for argument, hypothesis, or explanation; it demands performance. Entertainment has become the supraideology of all discourse in our electronic media, lulling us into the perception that, having been exposed to complex issues, we actually know something, when in reality we may simply have been briefly diverted or entertained, not challenged to engage in the convoluted processes of confronting, interpreting, and assimilating, and in the kinds of serious reflection and discourse that should follow.

It is a sobering thought, for example, that the implications of research on differential treatment of boys and girls in the classroom were probably conveyed to more Americans through *Doonesbury* cartoons than through any other channel of communication. And, in early August of this year, Sommers appeared in one of those "nanosecond for controversy" segments that characterize the proliferating magazine-format TV shows, explaining to Connie Chung the lapses in accuracy of certain factual information being promulgated by various feminist writers. Very little time was allotted to the other guest in this segment, Cynthia Crossen, who has just published a compelling analysis of the manipulation of facts in America, showing how truth is "tainted": research is conducted under the auspices of political and economic interests; facts are manufactured, manipulated, and suppressed to enhance corporate images, promote products or projects, and even influence juries. A more in-depth exploration of Crossen's work would certainly have placed Sommers' contentions in a more meaningful context. But there was no time; the next segment—on a totally different topic—loomed, coming up right after a half-dozen commercial messages.

My years as editor of a feminist journal for women in all aspects of higher education have intensified my conviction that if feminism is to be taken seriously in the culture at large and the promise of its activist origins fulfilled, there must be strong, sustained links between theory and practice. The academic analyses and the debates motivated by tough issues like conceptions of gender, gender relations, and gender equity must also be conveyed within contexts and in terms intelligible to "average thinking people." Unfortunately, a good deal of feminist thinking and theorizing has been expressed in arcane, unduly complex language that may well be meaningful only to the like-minded.

There are indications that feminists are beginning to see the wisdom of working to simplify communication about complicated issues. Indeed, an editorial in the summer 1992 issue of *Signs* calls on those writing feminist academic prose to consider key questions: "...how does our writing sound these days? And who reads it? Who is attracted to it? Who understands it?"

•*Wage opinion*

Feminists have to be more willing to "wage opinion," to use Naomi Wolf's phrase. Women have been all but absent from the centers of opinion in this country; the proportion of op-ed writers, guests on serious discussion shows like *Meet the Press* or *Firing Line*, and news commentators and analysts who are women is quite small.

Most women seem to have little stomach for direct, confrontational debate on controversial matters. We may be reluctant to violate the norms we've internalized about how women ought to interact and may attend more than we should to the voice that from childhood has admonished us, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." More of us need to divert our energies away from maintaining equanimity and to overcome the need to conciliate. Internecine struggles are not usually pleasant, but they may be the only way real consensus can be achieved and genuine progress made.

Sommers is unafraid to speak confrontationally and authoritatively, even when some of the authority derives from *argumentum ad feminam*, reliance on vague or anonymous reports, and even sheer chutzpah. Surely other feminists can do at least as well. We need more people ready and able to engage in debate with those—like Sommers—who have the nerve and the connections to get their stories before the public. We need more feminists willing to risk inviting criticism, infuriating the opposition, being wrong, or even simply looking silly. In my view, feminism needs a little more Molly Ivins and a little less MLA.

•*Public relations are important.*

At the conclusion of the first symposium of editors of feminist journals convened last year by the National Women's Studies journal in Durham, New Hampshire, one of the strongest points of consensus was that feminism in all its manifestations needs better public relations. We need to encourage more feminists to develop the ability to present complicated theorizing and complex information in interesting, lively, engaging ways, with insight, empathy, and good humor. We need to show, not simply tell, the connections between aspects of feminist thinking and women's everyday lives. One way we might do this is to extend the reach of books like Jean O'Barr's *Feminism in Action: Building Institutions & Community Through Women's Studies.*

•*Beware the factoids*

Sommers is very credible in her attacks on "feminist factoids"—those pieces of unverified or inaccurate information presented as true which then gain currency through repetition. As we strive to bring to the public more issues of importance to feminists, we will need to be scrupulous in our attention to every detail—whether of discrete fact or of synthesis and theory. We need to be equally rigorous about the quality of our research methodologies and careful about the meanings and conclusions that are drawn from research results.

Finally, the attacks Sommers has launched through her book and its attendant publicity campaign can be turned to feminism's advantage at this point in its evolution. Sommers has exposed potential vulnerabilities that, once they are acknowledged and analyzed, can be effectively addressed.

None of this will come easily, of course. Despite the volumes that have been written about it, modern feminism is still in its infancy. Until enough time has passed in which to build solid bases of replicated research and hard data, feminists will continue to rely heavily on tentative theory and on explanatory fictions as we struggle toward establishment of new paradigms. No traditions so entrenched as gender relations are going to shift totally in a single lifetime or perhaps even a single era. In Hegelian terms, there is a dialectic at work (some have termed it a "phase" process) in which equilibrium is being challenged and out of which synthesis will ultimately emerge.

In many ways, *Who Stole Feminism?* offers the voice and the views of a conservative clinging to the past, the familiar, the comfortable, in the midst of the storms of change. This is just the time that feminists need to become savvier about the relationships between epistemology and modern media. We need to be less opaque and less inclined to operate in closed, self-referential systems. We need to develop communicators and feminist PR experts who have "scribal" abilities, who can stand between theorists and researchers and those who need and want to understand and apply the results of their work.

Patricia Farrant is editor of Initiatives, *the journal of the National Association for Women in Education.*

WRITE FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

What's your opinion? The debate about *Who Stole Feminism?* will continue in the Spring 1995 issue, and we encourage responses to this special issue of *Democratic Culture* and additional essays on Christina Hoff Sommers.

We need your contributions to create this newsletter. We're looking for essays, campus reports, book reviews, letters, or anything else of interest to our members. And keep us informed about what's happening on your campus.

For a more timely response, please contact editor John Wilson directly at 1414 E. 59th St. #867, Chicago, IL 60637; 312-753-0460; email: jkw3@midway.uchicago.edu.

Radical Teaching with Conservative Effects

Donna Dunbar-Odom

THE CURRENT PUSH-PULL between the pedagogical claims of the right and the left can be crudely characterized as the right's call for conservative classroom materials and methods versus the left's call to democratize the classroom in order to break down traditional hierarchies. Rather than produce one more critique of the right's hypocrisies and/or inaccuracies, I want to draw attention to "blindnesses" I've noticed among teachers on the left: a tendency to produce global definitions of difference (particularly on the basis of class) that serve to erase other, problematic areas of difference and a tendency to assume that students who do not act on their understanding of class politics are somehow not developmentally ready to do so.

As a first-generation college student from a working-class background, I suppose I can make some claim to speak from a position of "difference." I learned, however, to name myself "first-generation college student" and "working-class" only after I had completed a Master's degree in English. "Difference" simply did not figure in my perception of myself. It was I who was "mainstream" and others who were "nontraditional," and while I might have been alienated from many of the conditions of traditional academic life, I was not an alien.

It is hard to say what effect my class position had (and has) on my writing. Perhaps it is evident in the difficulty I have asserting my arguments or in my tendency to bury my arguments or in my need for multiple revisions. But I cannot say with certainty that these are strictly "class-related" difficulties, and I hesitate to name them as such. To do so erases all the other factors that constitute me as a writer and highlights my weaknesses at the expense of my strengths.

As a basic writing teacher, I worked with students from working-class backgrounds, but I also worked with middle-class students, students of color, students whose parents were teachers, students who had enjoyed and done well in high school—that is, students who do not fall into easily quantifiable categories of background and ability. Working-class background is not an automatic sign of deficiency. To think about students in terms of class can help to explain certain characteristics of their classroom performance and written work, but it is not a reliable indicator of attitude or ability; as an explanatory category, it has limited value.

I am profoundly aware of the limitations of these terms to describe my experiences inside and outside of the academy. "First-generation college student" and "working-class" are terms that someone else might have used to describe me but never ones that I would have taken for myself because they would have pointed to my "difference" as a *deficiency* rather than a *condition*. It was only after I became a teacher that I heard myself included in the terms used to describe my students, and it was only after I had been teaching basic writing for several years that I began to comprehend the power relations at work in the terms used by one group to describe the experiences of another because usually those terms are used to imply deficiency.

For many educators who overtly identify themselves as interested in disrupting relations of power, the discussion of class has served as a means to globalize the discussion of difference. Within the terms of this argument (a roughly Althusserian model), the state produces "otherness" rather than "otherness" being a result of some feature of or within those whose experience is being named. Within these terms, the purpose of the capitalist state is to produce the means of production, and a vital part of production is labor. Schools, then, serve to produce the elite class of managers, the working class of wage laborers, and an underclass. Those who fail are trained to blame themselves for their failure. "Radical" educators, therefore, work to show how schools participate in the reproduction of labor and define liberation in terms of resistance.

The discussion of class allows contemporary teachers a way to group students in order to represent them; at the same time, this grouping allows teachers to think of their students as "knowable" and even transparent. In the move to convince students that they are oppressed, there is the assumption that these students are not intellectually or developmentally ready or prepared to comprehend or appreciate their oppression without the teacher's intervention.

In my field of composition, Ira Shor is probably the most cited American radical educator, and he is, to my mind, the quintessential "radical" teacher because of his attempts to make use of his own working-class background and his continuing efforts to ground his political theory in his particular assignments and particular classes with particular students. I've been greatly influenced by the work he does, but his work exhibits a kind of "blindness" (shared by many of his colleagues) in that, despite his efforts to address difference, he, too, talks in globalizing and developmental terms about his students.

Shor's *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* (South End Press, 1980) describes something of his genesis into and development as a liberatory teacher and develops his theory of what it means to teach working-class students "to dually empower [them], with stronger literacy and with a self-articulated grasp of meaning in their world."(xxv) He uses the term "worker-students" to refer to his students in order to differentiate them from what we must assume are "traditional" students. But despite his attempts to include women and people of color in his description, his characterization of "worker-students" is a surprisingly sentimental one in which individuals are described in global terms:

> There are further contours to the strengths remaining in worker-students despite a fragmented social life and their institutional ordeals. They pride themselves on their toughness. They don't whine, ask for pity, or feel sorry for themselves. Their need to show the world that they can take it leads them to reject help, even when they want it. This is their way of preserving their autonomy. They express a rebellious independence in the face of giant institutions which have tried to make them obedient. The thumbs of authority have left them neither docile nor defeated.(36)

Anyone who has worked in a college or university which has a significant percentage of first-generation college students among its numbers will recognize the limitations of this description. While it is certainly a romantic characterization (who wouldn't want to see herself described as someone who defies the "thumbs of authority"?), I also see it as seriously problematic, in that it's going to limit how the teacher perceives the students. "Class" may be seen by the teacher as signifying attitudes and assumptions that may or may not play a part in the students' experiences.

In his more recent *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for*

Social Change (University of Chicago Press, 1992), Shor works to expand his understanding of difference in the many overlapping ways that it is represented in the classroom. But here I'm disturbed by his understanding of resistance which is conceived largely in terms of "playing dumb" or "getting by," with little appreciation of student resistance itself as (at least potentially) political resistance to Shor's own political agenda. Finally, activism against the interests of bourgeois culture (e.g., protesting US government involvement in the Nicaraguan government) remains the ultimate sign of classroom success; student resistance to such activism is termed a sign of their not yet being ready for that level of commitment rather than their having made a political decision in conflict with Shor's position: "At the end, I mentioned some activities under way to protest the Contra war, but these adult students appeared not ready to act on their knowledge."(69) Despite Shor's increased attention to difference, I do not see that attention as yielding a productive rethinking of the role and potential of difference in the classroom. As the one who represents himself as being able to see the big picture, the critical pedagogue names the rules and, even in the name of empowerment, calls the shots.

Class, while seemingly offering an effective means for radical teachers to represent the interests of their "nontraditional" students, in fact only offers a reductive description of difference. In other words, in the efforts to define difference in terms of class, many educators turn to globalizing descriptions that produce a definition of the "other" as unproblematic so that—in the attempt to define difference—difference is erased. The turn to globalizing definitions, furthermore, marks a place where pedagogy—i.e. the reasoned and systematic study and practice of teaching—degenerates into didactics, where the students' job is to reproduce the teacher's knowledge—whether that knowledge is described in terms of "standards" or "empowerment."

Donna Dunbar-Odom teaches in the Department of Literature and Languages at East Texas State University.

Letter

Julian Markels

At the end of his account of the horrendous Vassar episode involving his son (Spring 1994), Richard Wolff invites debate on the possibility that there is "a series of rightward shifts underway that democrats everywhere need to address analytically and politically, both in theory and in practice." Here is one response to that invitation.

I don't think we can begin to see whether a rightward shift is underway until democrats can address the particular species of leftward shift, now so pervasive as to engulf *Democratic Culture*, in which people make it their reflex agenda to defend all but mindlessly anyone or anything the right is predictably attacking. I think it's possible that both sides are locked in a dance of reciprocal salivating in which no directional change can be detected and maybe none is occurring.

Before turning to Wolff's variation on this reflex, consider *DC*'s "Newsclip" story on Toni Morrison's Nobel Prize that runs alongside Wolff's article. Here we are told sure enough that the usual suspects (the *New Criterion* and the *Wall Street Journal*) attacked the Nobel award as racially motivated, politically correct, and aesthetically flawed. Should those folks even be dignified by an answer addressed to the readers of *DC*? I doubt it. But if so, and if *DC* argues as it should that there will always be aesthetic disagreement over the award of the Prize, then shouldn't the answer go something like this: "If the award was aesthetically and politically controversial—or even aesthetically flawed and politically motivated—then wasn't it like 98% of all previous Nobel awards? (Anybody for Solzhenitsyn?)" But *DC* declines to make such an answer and instead changes the subject to Morrison's call for greater attention to an "Africanist presence" in American literature. That too has been predictably misunderstood and willfully misinterpreted by the *Wall Street Journal*, and thus *DC* gets another shot at defending Morrison on the simpleminded terrain of the ritual enemy: "Simply because Morrison wants to end the silence about race in most discussions of American literature, it does not mean that she wants the subject of race to become the sole basis of literary criticism."

But the knee-jerk simplicities that may be sufficient to rebut the *Wall Street Journal* don't begin to speak to the political damage done by Toni Morrison's oversight and distortion in her sweeping claim that there has been scholarly silence until now about an Africanist presence in American literature. It would surely be no comfort to the *Wall Street Journal* to know what extensive and substantial work exactly on Morrison's wavelength had alreaady been done by Carolyn Karcher and Eric Sundquist and many others (lots of them white) before Morrison made her claim that it was all Establishment silence until she spoke up. I prefer to think she wasn't aware of such work, but that doesn't make *Playing in the Dark* any less self-serving or any less serious a suppression of the tradition and momentum of anti-racist scholarship. For readers of *DC* the question should be, not whether the *Wall Street Journal* is full of prunes, but whether someone giving highly publicized lectures in which she undertakes to prescribe an itemized agenda for academic scholarship on a subject whose already compelling scholarship she knows nothing about needs a blanket hurrah from us because she has been attacked by the *Wall Street Journal*.

I think Toni Morrison certainly deserved the Nobel Prize, both for the volume, variety, and wonderful risk-taking of her fiction and for the great individual achievements of *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*. I think she's our best living novelist, and I think Richard Wolff and Stephen Resnick are our best economic theorists. But I also want to question whether Wolff's reflections on his son's experience don't involve indirectly some of the same reflexes as *DC*'s riff on Morrison's Nobel Prize.

Wolff certainly persuades me that the star chamber proceedings to which the Vassar administration subjected his son was motivated more by a desire for "power, prestige, and prerogatives" than by a concern for "political correctness" in promoting equality and security for gays. But while he says that his son's victimization by a Kafkaesque trial for homophobia "shows that the struggle for gay inclusion can become exclusive and oppressive when allied to or managed by a group with a very different agenda," I don't think he questions appropriately the political implications of that fact. Why does the Vassar administration pursue its agenda of power, prestige, and prerogatives by affronting rather than appeasing the values of the *New Criterion* and the *Wall Street Journal* and by trying to manage as if it were a genuine

ally in the struggle for gay inclusion? Does that kind of behavior reflect a rightward shift? Well, maybe yes, under some definitions that democrats may want to consider. But would those be Wolff's definitions? If so, how would they be different from the right's standard definition of the tyranny of the left? Meanwhile, are there any definitions by which Vassar's conduct in withholding and suppressing evidence can be differentiated politically from Toni Morrison's conduct in erasing the record of anti-racist scholarship in her loudly cheered call for a new awareness of the Africanist presence?

Why doesn't somebody persuade South End Press to reprint Lenin's pamphlet on *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*?

Julian Markels teaches English at Ohio State University.

Richard Wolff replies:

Perhaps I did not show clearly enough how Vassar College's gross violations of even the most minimal civil rights of students to due process, presumption of innocence, etc. connect to broader social shifts to the right. My point was that Vassar's repeated pattern of such behavior reverses the trend since the 1960s—however modest—to grant students more rather than less influence over their college life from sexual behavior to curriculum to political action.

It is clever for Vassar's administration—traditionally linked to the establishment's liberal wing—to pursue its quest for a return to the pre-1960s power it enjoyed by posturing as the protector of an "official" multiculturalism. It thereby hopes to turn multiculturalism into a vehicle for that return. This goal parallels that of the establishment's conservative wing—e.g., the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorialists—who likewise seek a return to pre-1960s (and even pre-1930s) distributions of power, wealth, and culture.

The difference between the liberals and conservatives lies in how they exploit multiculturalism as a movement, not why. The conservatives denounce its influence as a social disaster (having first exaggerated it to ludicrous levels) to be overcome by a speedy return to the good old days as they imagine them. The liberals, like those as Vassar, seek much the same return, but they think it can best be achieved, given current social realities, by a controlled accommodation with multiculturalism, not by a counterproductive railing against it.

Markels' allusion to Lenin, I would guess, intends to suggest that as Lenin questioned "Democracy for what social ends?" so we should ask "Multiculturalism for what social ends?" This is a valid and very important kind of question. It drives home the point that however much we may endorse democracy and multiculturalism as ends in themselves, they are *always also* means (or obstacles, depending on the circumstances) to other ends. We may then confront situations in which, say, the desired end of multiculturalism is currently functioning as an obstacle to other desired ends (e.g. students' civil liberties). Of course, we should contest that functioning, contest those kinds of multiculturalism that serve as means to social objectives we oppose. If Markels is seeking to affirm some kinds of multiculturalism as against others by reference to how they articulate differentially to the social struggles of our time, I think he is quite right to question my not having made that same point in my article.

Richard Wolff teaches economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

John Wilson replies:

The point of my comment on the Toni Morrison controversy was not to evaluate whether Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* is "a suppression of the tradition and momentum of anti-racist scholarship." I'm inclined to agree with Morrison, but I'm willing to look at evidence of this tradition. However, I'm puzzled by the attempt to link TDC with the Vassar administration or the suggestion that I'm giving Morrison a "blanket hurrah." I criticized the *New Criterion* because it proclaimed that politically correct affirmative action, not literary talent, was the sole basis for her Nobel Prize. Markels' appreciation of Morrison's literary talents is excluded by the *New Criterion*'s dismissal of her as a purely political choice.

I'm even more puzzled by the connection between Morrison's alleged "erasing" of anti-racist scholarship and Vassar's violation of due process. Unlike a misuse of the disciplinary process, bad literary criticism is a victimless crime, and Morrison's book is far from bad. But Markels doesn't seem to mind Morrison's ideas; he only questions the originality of them. At worst, Morrison is a popularizer, not a thought criminal.

John K. Wilson is editor of Democratic Culture *and author of the forthcoming book,* The Myth of Political Correctness.

Letter

William Schultz

I appreciate receiving a sample copy of *Democratic Culture* and have read it with great interest. I am deeply offended, however, by a gross lapse from the general high seriousness of the publication. I refer, of course, to the tasteless attempt at parody, "An Open Letter to Gregory Jay and Gerald Graff," under the pseudonyms "Donald Morton" and "Mas'ud Zavarzadeh."

First, as an English teacher, I'm outraged by the depiction of English teachers who can't complete a phrase, much less a sentence, without loading it with clichés and jargon.

More importantly, though such satire might be amusing to you as an editor, if your readers misunderstand and take the article seriously, that simply plays into the hands of the oppressive bourgeois pluralist reactionaries who foster the illusion that persuasion is a legitimate human activity.

Please—leave Beavis and Butthead to the totalitarian free-market colonialist running dogs.

William Schultz teaches English at Muskingum College.

Medieval Group of TDC

Teachers for a Democratic Culture is pleased to announce the formation of the Medieval Group of TDC. In 1995, TDC will sponsor three sessions at the 30th International Congress on Medieval Studies: "Politics and Pedagogy: The Culture Wars," "Region, Culture and Race: Teaching the Middle Ages in a Multicultural Society," and "The Future of Erudition." For more information, contact:

Larry Scanlon, Department of English
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903.

A Tale of Two Cultures and Other Higher Superstitions

Steve Fuller

Review of Paul Gross and Norman Levitt, **Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science** *(Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994)*

OVER THE LAST thirty years, leftist humanists and social scientists have increasingly challenged the authority that the natural sciences enjoy throughout society. Originally these challenges addressed the role that natural scientists played in weapons research, environmental degradation, and gender and racial discrimination. But recently more principled challenges have been made of the very content and method of science by a group of interdisciplinary scholars in the field of "Science & Technology Studies" (STS) of which I am a part.

Until a couple of years ago, scientists largely ignored this mounting body of work in their own public writings. However, in 1992, two prominent works of science popularization—Lewis Wolpart's *The Unnatural Nature of Science* and Steven Weinberg's *Dreams of a Final Theory*—devoted entire chapters to describing the threat posed by the academic left critique of science, suggesting that it constituted a frontal assault on "civilization as we know it." Paul Gross and Norman Levitt, a distinguished biologist and mathematician, have now published the first book entirely devoted to the academic left critique.

In the few months that the book has been out, it has already gained a somewhat deserved reputation for being mean-spirited toward opponents. Nevertheless, Gross and Levitt have done their homework. They simply don't like what they see, and they spare no punches. It would be foolish for us self-styled "academic leftists" to reject out of hand what they say. For those who worry about the politics of our two authors, it is worth noting that they take enough potshots at conservative authors to convince me of their own avowed liberal sympathies.

What probably separates Gross and Levitt the most from TDC members is their resolute refusal to see politics reaching into the inner sanctum of scientific content and method. Their idea of a leftist scientist is Stephen Jay Gould, someone who has consistently ferreted out scoundrel scientists standing in the way of progressive social causes, but who has nevertheless attributed the discovery of these scoundrels to the naturally self-correcting character of scientific inquiry.

The range of opponents addressed by Gross and Levitt is truly staggering: postmodern cultural critics, STS scholars, feminists, Afrocentrists, deep ecologists, animal-rights activists, and AIDS activists. The reader will immediately notice that these groups do not have much in common—and many aren't even academics—which puts the authors at pains to identify them all as part of a coherent "academic left."

Nevertheless, Gross and Levitt are correct to claim that all of these groups see contemporary natural science as a deeply politicized practice that works mostly against the interests of progressive causes. Our authors deem this a pernicious standpoint, not merely because they believe it is false, but more importantly because they believe it has proven persuasive with a larger segment of the public, including policymakers, who are now beginning to saddle research and training in science with "politically correct" requirements.

Like other elite practitioners of the natural sciences, Gross and Levitt presume that what has been good for them is good for all scientists, and they place a premium on producing cutting-edge research as quickly as possible. On this view, the academic left is a spanner in the works. However, rank-and-file scientists do not abide by such imperatives. Most teach and administer for a living, and the research that they do does not demand results "by yesterday." The threat posed by the academic left to science is thus primarily to a research practice that has already come to resemble the capitalist mode of production.

One didactic advantage afforded by our authors' monolithic portrayal of the natural sciences is that it gives us license to revisit the "Two Cultures" controversy that C.P. Snow sparked with his 1959 Rede Lecture. Although Snow himself took the "two cultures" to suffer from mutual incomprehension, his speech clearly left humanists with the impression that the burden was primarily theirs. Especially after a 1962 lecture by F.R. Leavis, Snow has been read as arguing that the spiritual goals championed by humanists had been historically superseded by material needs that only science can satisfy.

However, Snow was making a much more evenhanded point, namely, that while scientific skills are singularly necessary for the survival of humanity, scientists lack the moral imagination, especially the facility with alternative futures, that is typically developed by the humanities. Snow's ideal civil servant would thus be equipped with a humanist's sense of ends and a scientist's sense of means.

Snow's contrast was not between a bloodless technocrat and an elitist litterateur. Rather, it was between someone like John Desmond Bernal, the X-Ray crystallographer and Soviet sympathizer, and someone like George Orwell, the novelist and liberal pamphleteer.

In the decade following the end of World War II, BBC Radio frequently held debates between scientists and humanists on the future of Western Civilization (a.k.a. British society). With a few exceptions, the scientists contended that the path charted by scientific materialism made it inevitable that political problems would be solved by technical means. This would remove the volatility caused by protracted public debate, the supposed root of Fascism's mass appeal.

The humanists, again with some exceptions, were born-again liberals, former Communists who could not tolerate the excesses of the Stalinist regime, even if they were committed in the name of the proletarian revolution. Orwell, in particular, was scandalized by the degree to which the scientists would bend over backwards to excuse the Soviets. Orwell was convinced that the unmitigated attraction of scientists to Marxism reflected deep totalitarian tendencies in the scientific mind.

If the natural sciences held the keys to human emancipation, then clearly their representatives were projecting the wrong image by leaning so heavily on the idea of nature speaking in one overbearing voice. Despite the changes in players and positions over the last 30 years, natural science has not solved its public relations problems, as Gross and Levitt acknowledge. Unfortunately, their proposals do little to inspire confidence in their own claims about the independence of scientific knowledge from social conditions. Our authors would remedy the current situation by requiring more traditional science education for everyone and threatening postmodernists with the prospect of scientists passing judgment on their scholarship. While more reciprocity and interpenetration of disciplinary boundaries would be acceptable, it is clear that Gross and Levitt are advocating a dual-pronged strategy of indoctrination and censorship.

The burden of this book is to try to show that natural scientific knowledge is separable from the various social contexts in which it is embedded. Since Gross and Levitt stake out the epistemological high ground for science—its "realism"—from which assorted costs and benefits for society are said to flow, I expected to come away with some clear sense of where our authors think "science" ends and "society" begins. I was instructively disappointed, and there is probably a strong connection between their own failure on this score and what they find least palatable about the academic left critique of science.

Gross and Levitt are irked by many things, but nothing arouses their ire as much as "standpoint epistemology," an expression originally taken from Lukacs' understanding of the privileged role of proletarian consciousness in revolutionary praxis, but now more generally referring to the relative objectivity of peoples traditionally marginalized

from the structures of power in society. On this basis, some feminists and multiculturalists have argued for the superiority of "women's knowledge" or "African knowledge" to the classical Western modes of science.

Suppose that Gross and Levitt are correct that the natural sciences produce a universal form of knowledge. How could the West have come to discover such a thing in its history? After all, modern natural science, with its dual emphasis on experimental testing and mathematical calculation, did not emerge in many places at once, but only from some rather special developments in 17th century Northwestern Europe.

Moreover, for at least two centuries after its appearance, Europeans were themselves ambivalent about the precise significance of this new science: Did it extend or refute Christianity? Was it suitable for university instruction or merely an avocation of gentlemen? Did substantial investment in science make an appreciable difference to material progress or did it merely rationalize discoveries that could have been made without knowledge of science?

The natural sciences slowly worked their way into the university curriculum. Until about 100 years ago, the great "scientists" who held academic posts all their lives were typically accredited in a liberal arts subject like philosophy or mathematics. Until the end of the last century, Westerners generally treated the natural sciences as a peculiar accomplishment of their own culture—an accomplishment, even when held in highest esteem, that was regarded as uniquely Western.

The first voluntary and successful appropriation of the natural science by a non-Western country came in Japan, which become one of the six leading military and industrial powers in the world during the period 1870-1900. Western merchants and diplomats, who had for years tried to sell all manner of things to the Far East, were surprised at how the Japanese eagerly sought training in European chemistry and physics but showed little interest in acquiring such classical status markers of "civilization" as knowledge of fine art, philosophy, and literature.

Of course, Japan was not an isolated case. The heyday of European imperialism had unwittingly produced other "standpoints." The emergence of colonial centers of scientific research, sometimes staffed primarily by assimilated non-Westerners, led humanists in the metropolitan powers to reconceptualize the "uniqueness" of Western science as a matter of contingency, as if it were only by accident that the natural sciences had emerged in Europe rather than China, India, or Egypt.

It was by posing the question of science as one of historical accident, rather than of historical necessity, that "history of science" as a recognizable field of study was born. The force of this question was to suggest both that the natural sciences were within any culture's reach and that Europe's domination of the globe was by no means guaranteed in perpetuity. The moral of this story is that history does not arrive in a neat ontological package, with some bits labeled "necessary," "universal," or "true," and other bits labeled "accidental," "particular," or "false."

Events happen in bundles, and only after some time has passed as they unraveled and labeled. Only through such retellings of the past do we come to have any strong sense of what the world obliges, forbids, and merely permits. These are the first lessons of the "social constructivist" epistemology that underwrites most of the work that Gross and Levitt criticize. They help explain why our authors are ultimately unable to pinpoint the realist core of science, namely, because that core has been nothing more (and nothing less) than those aspects of science that have held up well in cross-cultural translation. Now, however, the advent of feminist and multiculturalist critiques of science from within our own culture, threatens to upset the balance of trade again.

Since Gross and Levitt periodically try to tar academic leftists with the brush of "relativism" and "idealism," let me emphasize that nothing said here requires denying the obvious: we have managed to eliminate certain deadly diseases, astronauts have flown in space, and atomic bombs have caused untold damage. The bone of contention is over the explanation one gives for these achievements and, in some cases, the ultimate value one attributes to them.

Unfortunately, their proposals do little to inspire confidence in their own claims about the independence of scientific knowledge from social conditions.

Contrary to what our authors suggest, it seems to me that the "higher superstition" lies in crediting these achievements to the inherent power of particular technical formulas or specialized knowledge, as if these alone could have brought about the vaunted results. At most, a body of scientific knowledge is a synecdoche, and probably only a metonymy, for the real-world effects associated with it. The remarkable thing about science has been its ability to serve as a rallying point for the coordination of human effort, especially the effort of those who do not have first-hand knowledge of the science in question.

I don't want to leave the impression that I see the book in a wholly negative light. I have disputed Gross and Levitt only at the most general level of their thesis, but they can be quite acute about particular excesses in academic left arguments against science, such as their critique of recent attempts by literary theorists and some social scientists to metaphorically appropriate chaos theory, non-linear dynamics, and quantum mechanics, as if these serve to undermine the legitimacy of the natural sciences.

One does not need to be a scientific expert to fault this kind of "metaphor-mongering" as Gross and Levitt call it. (They make a similar charge against feminist critiques, but here I think they underestimate the depth with which gender metaphors affect scientific consciousness.) The fact that humanists have not yet halted the funding of the natural sciences, or have even managed to siphon off some of the funding for themselves, is sufficient evidence that we are nowhere near the dawn of a "new age" for science—however desirable such a state of affairs might be.

Here it would pay for the academic left to contextualize its own utopian urges. Much of the scientific metaphor-mongering critiqued by Gross and Levitt emerges from an institutional setting in which the legitimacy of philosophy and the human sciences still very much depends on imitating the natural sciences, even if only at a verbal level.

Failure to appreciate the deeply scientistic character of French academic culture has led many an American humanist to see subversive moves in the use of words like "rhizome" and "fractal" that are not really meant, and which, in the context of our own academic culture, invite only the kind of scorn that Gross and Levitt gladly heap upon such work.

Finally, and most seriously, Gross and Levitt charge that the academic left has largely refused to air its own disagreements in public, especially whenever exotic epistemic powers are being claimed for a traditionally underprivileged group. Although some feminists come under attack, they base their case mainly on the failure of leftist scholars to contest the "Melanin Hypothesis," which attributes psychokinetic powers to dark-skinned peoples. While there is more than a grain of truth in what Gross and Levitt say, they fail to mention that "closure in the ranks" is even more characteristic of natural scientists.

Given that the rising costs of research increasingly pit natural scientists against one another, one would expect—and hope—to see more open debate about the priority of these fields. If natural scientists were to be as public in their disagreements as Gross and Levitt would like the academic left to be, then perhaps some realignment of the "two cultures" would finally take place.

Steve Fuller holds the chair in Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Durham, England.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW!

JOIN TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE WITH THIS FORM

The continuing growth and success of TDC depends on your involvement and your contributions. We ask all current TDC members to send in a check (no form is needed unless you have changed your address) to cover 1994-95. We also encourage non-members who have received this newsletter to join us. Please mail this membership form to: **Teachers for a Democratic Culture, P.O. Box 6405, Evanston IL 60204.**

__Yes, I want to become a member of TDC __Yes, I want to renew my membership in TDC

Enclosed is my 1994–95 contribution of: ___$50 ___$25 ___$5 (students/low-income)

Name_____

Department_____School or Affiliation_____

City_____State_____Zip_____

Home Address (if preferred)_____

Phone Numbers: Business_____FAX_____Home_____ E-mail_____

democratic
Culture

Teachers for a Democratic Culture
P.O. Box 6405
Evanston, IL 60204

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 7706